



# Facts and figures

Safe food day after day: our job!

**2015**



Belgian Food Safety Agency  
AC - Kruidtuin  
Food Safety Center  
Kruidtuinlaan 55  
1000 Brussels  
Tel.: 02 211 82 11

[www.favv.be](http://www.favv.be)

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Herman Diricks, CEO  
Belgian Food Safety Agency  
AC-Kruidtuin - Food Safety Center  
Kruidtuinlaan, 55 - 1000 Brussels

**Final Editing**

Yasmine Ghafir, Lieve Busschots

**Graphic Design**

Communication Department BFSA  
Gert Van Kerckhove - Nir Shemmer

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# Our mission

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



Herman Diricks,  
*Chief Executive Officer*



## Foreword

Dear reader,

You are about to read the BFSA's new annual report. In the same vein as previous reports, this annual report offers a comprehensive overview of our activities, detailed results on our website and a summary which is also available on paper. Eventually, we will also present the results in a more interactive way.

The results of 2015 are in line with those of 2014. The food safety barometer is still evolving in the right direction, food safety has increased by 1% compared to 2014 and by 29.3% compared to reference year 2007. In my opinion, the food safety barometer is a very important indicator, since it comprises 30 indicators and was developed by the Agency's Scientific Committee.

Sectors that were doing great last year, such as the supply sector, the primary sector and the processing sector, continue to do so this year. In the retail sector, the hotel and catering sector and in institutional kitchens, these are basically the sectors which deliver directly to the consumer, we see an improvement compared to 2014. However, additional efforts will be necessary if we wish to bring these sectors up to the level of the other sectors.

Our policy on validated self-checking systems is paying off: the number of companies with self-checking systems continues to increase.

Moreover, businesses that have a self-checking system consistently obtain better scores, regardless of their sector. Nevertheless, BFSA inspections of these businesses remain necessary, albeit at a lower frequency.

Checks and inspections are not the only actions the BFSA undertakes in order to improve food safety. The Agency also puts a lot of effort into its training programmes: 337 sessions with more than 9,400 participants. In addition, the Agency furthers its efforts to support businesses by means of self-checking guides and comprehensive information provision. This information is disseminated through diverse communication channels, with the BFSA website playing an increasingly important role.

Throughout the years, the BFSA has continued to develop support for SMEs, among others things by being attentive to opportunities for flexibility within a European context and by implementing administrative simplifications where possible.

The BFSA continues to ensure equal treatment of all operators, artisanal producers included. In the spirit of the Agency's mission statement, the food and feed business operators (FFBOs) have to be able to prove that their work methods are safe. The promotion of export also remains an important objective with, among other things, the start-up of the project FOEDEX which is intended to reinforce the export department.

Consumer protection has always been and will remain our core business. We continue to pay a lot of attention to complaints and we provide consumers with detailed information, not only general information. On June 30, 2015 the BFSA started publishing the inspection results. In the first days after the publication of the results our servers were swamped with information requests, but afterwards the results could be easily accessed.

Reducing the use of antibiotics on cattle farms is another important social issue. In this respect, the Agency cooperates with all of its stakeholders to achieve this reduction.

The BFSA's 2015-2017 business plan has to meet the different challenges the Agency is faced with. The budget reductions and the accompanying staff reductions resulted in a net loss of 58 full time equivalents, i.e. 5% of our total workforce. This led to an even bigger reduction of the total number of missions, but the BFSA was able to keep this decrease in the number of missions on the inspection programme limited to 1.7% and keep the number of sampling missions equal to that of 2014. However, it goes without saying that this cost-cutting exercise required a considerable effort from the Agency's staff, for which I would like to express my gratitude.

Needless to say, all BFSA employees deserve everyone's utmost respect for the way they carry out the Agency's mission, whether they be administrative or supporting personnel carrying out preliminary tasks or our experts in the field.

**“Protecting the consumer has always been and will remain our core business”**

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# THE BFSA

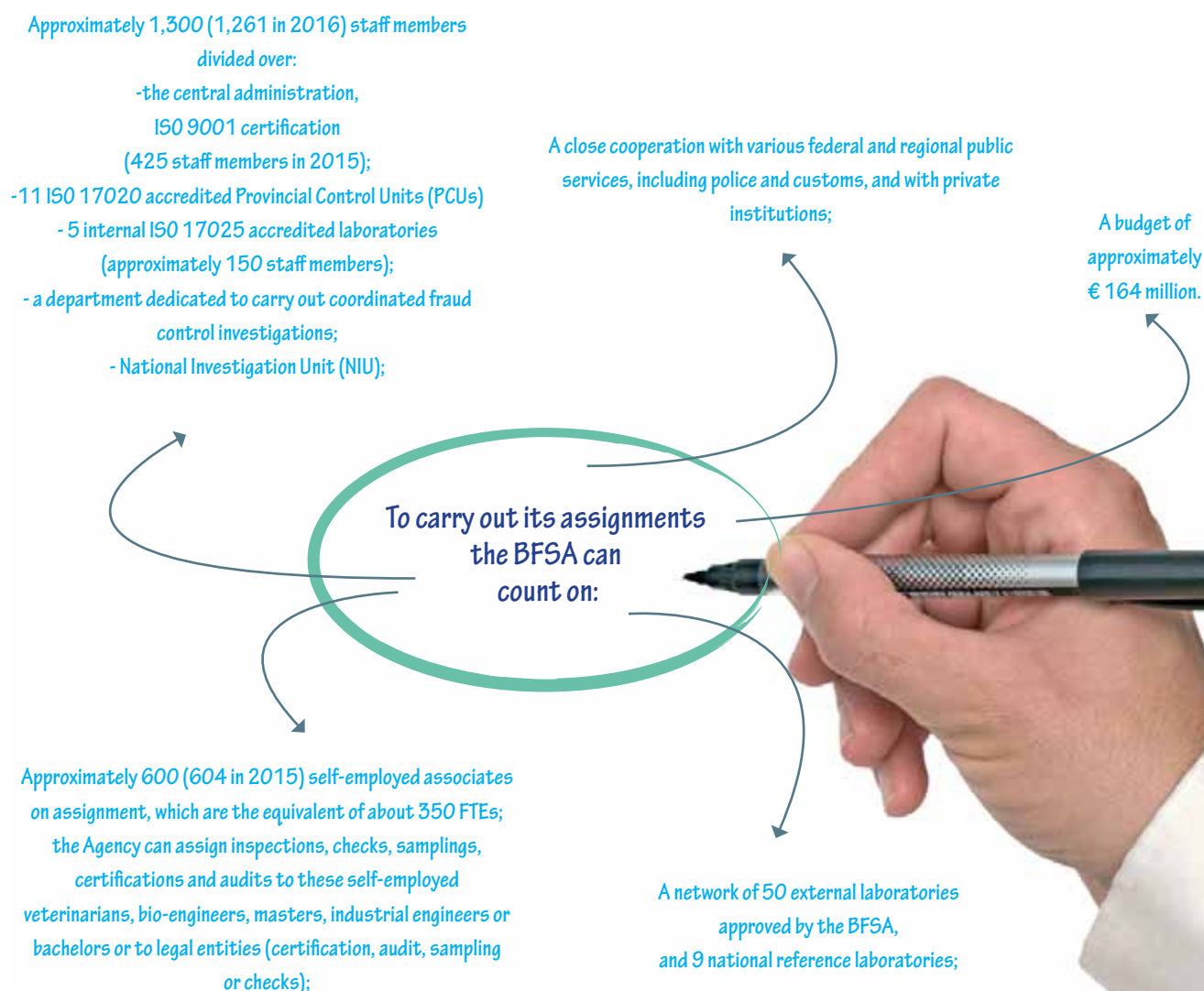
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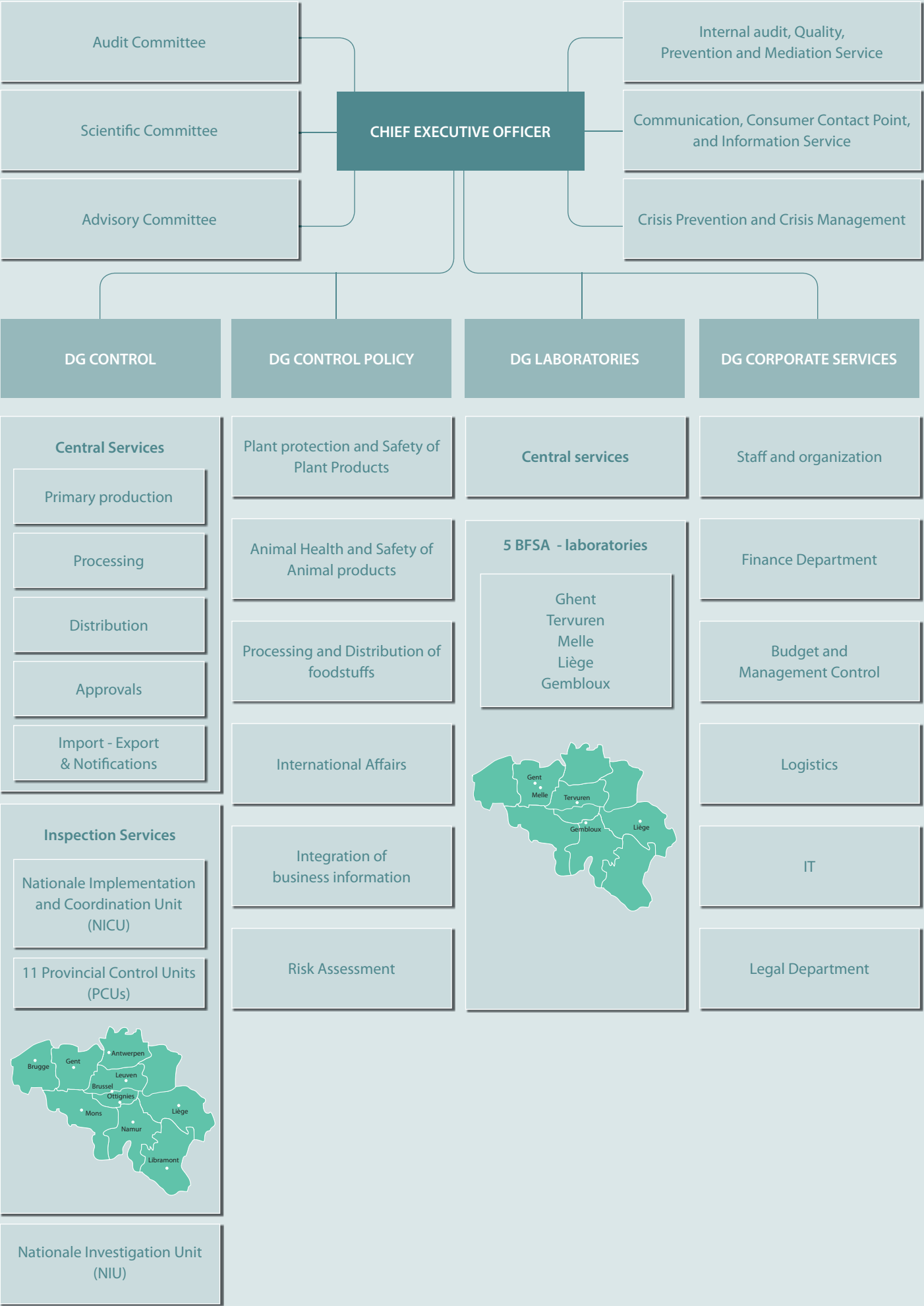


The Belgian Food Safety Agency (BFSA) was founded by the Act of 4 February 2000. The BFSA is a federal executive agency which is responsible for the assessment and the management of risks that may be harmful to the health of consumers and/or to the health of animals and plants. The Agency carries out food safety inspections throughout the entire food chain.

The BFSA integrates all control services, which are responsible for the entire food chain.

The Agency not only conducts checks on foodstuffs, feed, fertilizers and crop protection products, but it is also responsible for the prevention and control of animal diseases and plant health. The Agency is also responsible for establishing the rules for checks, certification and infrastructure standards FFBOs have to comply with. The Agency manages all communications directed towards FFBOs and consumers.

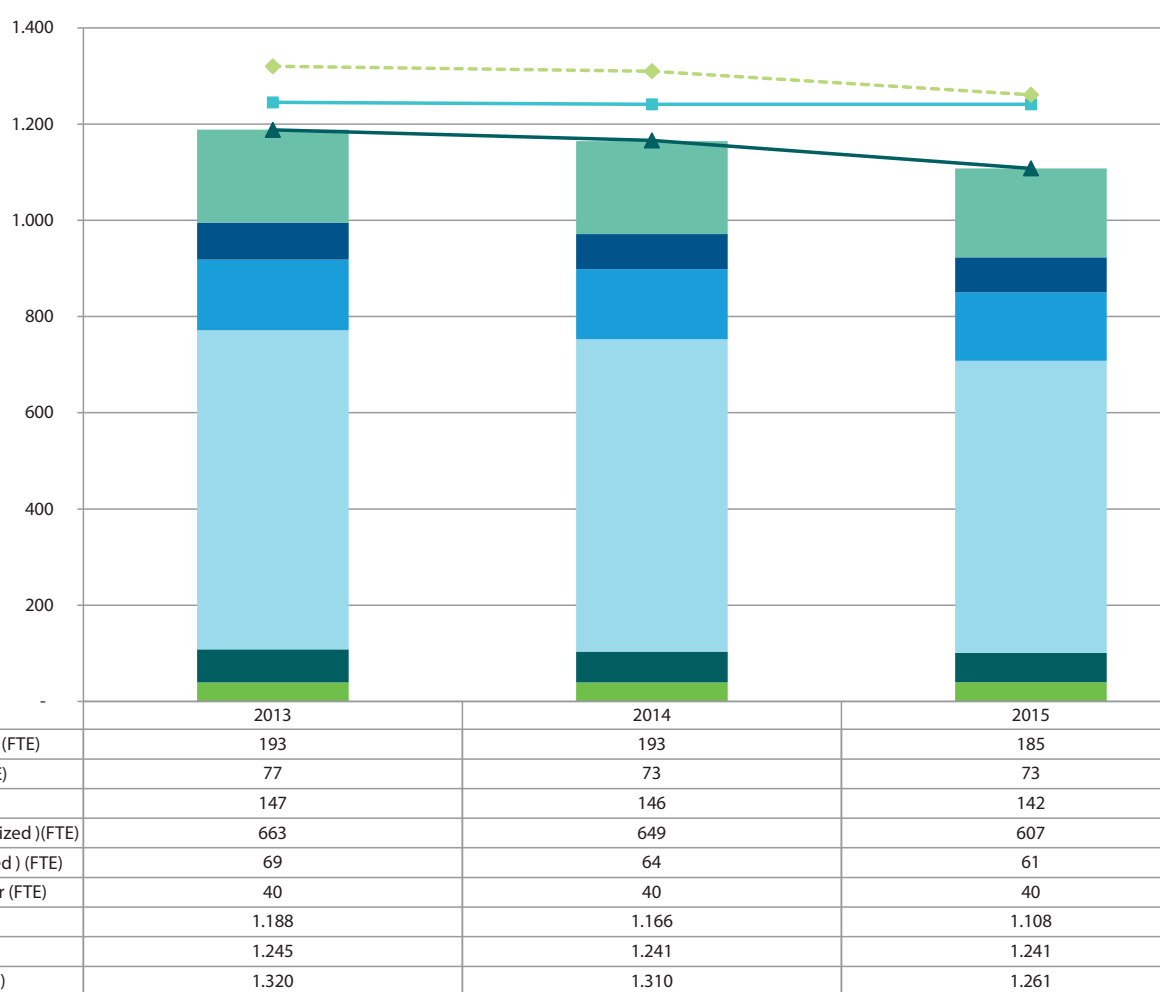




## 1.1. Personnel

The number of Agency employees is declining, which can be explained by the savings measures the Agency is subject to.

*FTE: full-time equivalent*





## 1.2. Budget

In addition to public funding, the Agency has its own revenues. In 2015, the Agency's global revenue has diminished compared to 2014 due to a lower government endowment. As in previous years, the government has imposed important cost-cutting measures.

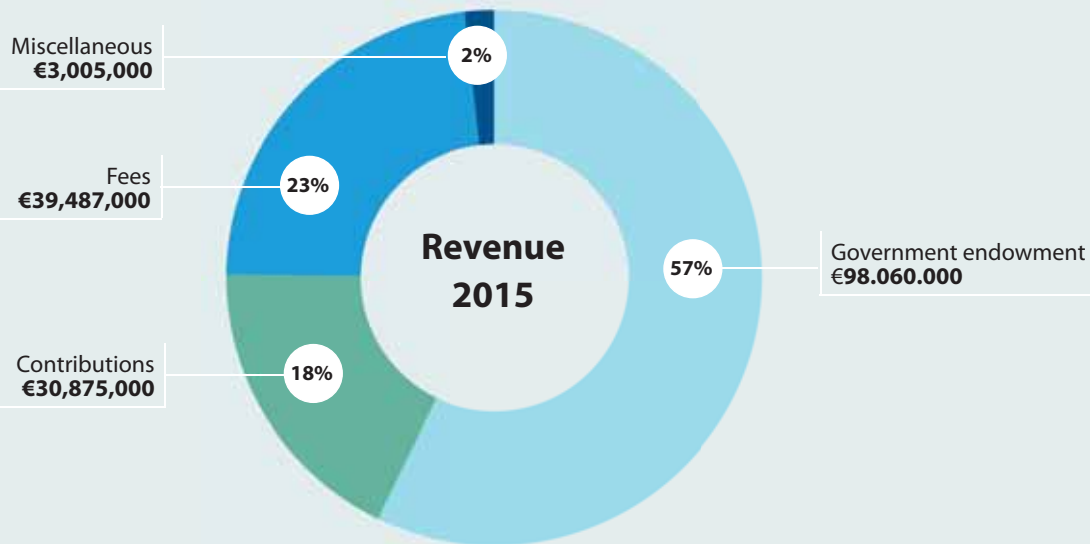
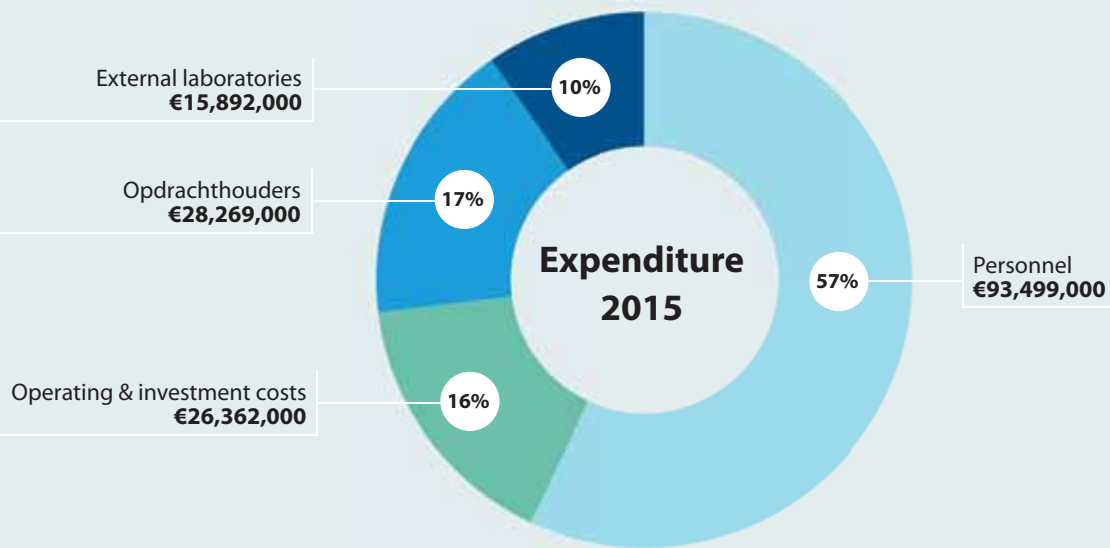
For the BFSa this meant saving €12.177 million and limiting expenditure to the level needed to ensure continuity of the Agency's core business. These measures have strongly put the brakes on a number of projects, but the work load itself has not diminished.

### Expenditure

	REALIZATIONS 2013	REALIZATIONS 2014	REALIZATIONS 2015
<b>Personnel</b>			
Wages and salaries	€84,846,000	€87,063,000	€86,000,000
Other personnel costs	€7,772,000	€8,298,000	€7,499,000
<b>Operating costs</b>			
Personnel and operating costs	€7,693,000	€8,153,000	€7,263,000
IT	€7,463,000	€7,240,000	€6,363,000
Services rendered by external associates	€27,657,000	€26,249,000	€28,269,000
External laboratories	€19,493,000	€17,549,000	€15,892,000
Other operating costs	€7,704,000	€9,426,000	€11,138,000
<b>Investments</b>			
Equipment, furniture, IT	€3,507,000	€2,863,000	€1,598,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>€166,135,000</b>	<b>€166,841,000</b>	<b>€164,022,000</b>

### Revenue

	REALIZATIONS 2013	REALIZATIONS 2014	REALIZATIONS 2015
Government endowment	€106,820,000	€108,164,000	€98,060,000
Contributions	€30,676,000	€31,296,000	€30,875,000
Fees	€40,451,000	€38,884,000	€39,487,000
Miscellaneous	€7,331,000	€6,857,000	€3,005,000
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>€185,278,000</b>	<b>€185,201,000</b>	<b>€171,427,000</b>





### 1.3. Business plan 2015 - 2017

The main objectives of the business plan for 2015-2017 are: the preservation of the BFSA's core tasks, ensuring policy continuity with a focus on the protection of consumers and well-intentioned food business operators, and a evolving cautiously towards an even better organization in budgetary difficult times.

Strategic and operational objectives and their corresponding KPIs are formulated based on a clear vision, mission and values.



The business plan for the period 2015-2017 is centred around 5 strategic themes:

1.	An efficient organization of food chain monitoring with a view to ensuring the highest possible level of food safety.
2.	An appropriate regulatory framework and supporting measures to improve food chain safety.
3.	An agency accepted by food business operators and which is recognized by society as a whole and by consumers in particular, both nationally and internationally.
4.	An optimal level of services rendered to companies regarding food chain safety and to governments concerning the delegation of tasks.
5.	Optimal organizational management.

The Agency continues to properly implement its inspection and analyses programmes which are based on risk analyses and supported by a policy aimed at ensuring high quality inspections and a maximum number of FFBOs obtaining favourable inspection results. Administrative simplification, attention for the specific status of self-employed workers, micro-enterprises and small and medium enterprises, providing all the necessary tools and communicating clearly are also basic elements of this policy. The Agency will continue to be understanding towards operators with good intentions, but it will adopt a hard-line enforcement policy towards obstinate or fraudulent FFBOs.

The significant savings imposed to all public services also have an impact on the Agency's operations. A reduction of staff members and operating grants will inevitably entail that choices will have to be made in consultation with the stakeholders with regard to actions and activities.

However, the inspection and analyses programme will be ensured as much as possible. Also the activities covered by the Agency's own revenue will continue.

Consulting with all of the stakeholders is considered of paramount importance, but in the end the Agency remains responsible for

the policy pursued in the context of European and national regulations. The BFSA aims towards complete transparency by publicly reporting on its activities, using the food safety, animal health and plant health barometers as overall indicators.

Concerning export, the BFSA continues to make substantial efforts. However, these efforts can only lead to results if they are embedded in a global policy established by the different public services involved - federal as well as regional - and in consultation with the sector organizations.

A considerable range of tasks is entrusted to third parties. Institutions such as CODA-CERVA, DGZ and ARSIA, as well as the self-employed associates on assignment will remain crucial partners. The BFSA will also continue to pursue fruitful partnerships with first line veterinary practitioners.

Quality and effectiveness still remain the core of our approach. The BFSA retains its certified quality systems and continuously assesses its processes to find opportunities for improvement regarding efficiency, internal control and risk management.

As in many organizations, the staff's motivation and competencies are the Agency's most valuable resource. Despite the budgetary restrictions, the BFSA wishes to remain an excellent employer in the years to come.



## 1.4. BFSA values

The business plan 2015-2017 places special emphasis on the development of the Agency's values. Together with the BFSA's mission statement and its vision, these values determine the Agency's *modus operandi*.



### Professionalism

The BFSA is a dynamic organization with a committed workforce. We carry out our mission in an efficient, qualitatively outstanding and targeted manner which meets the needs and expectations of our clients. The exchange of knowledge and continuous training guarantee our expertise.

### Trust

We create a positive environment in which opportunities are created as well as chances to take on responsibility. The focus lies on loyalty and constructive cooperation beyond borders.

Respect

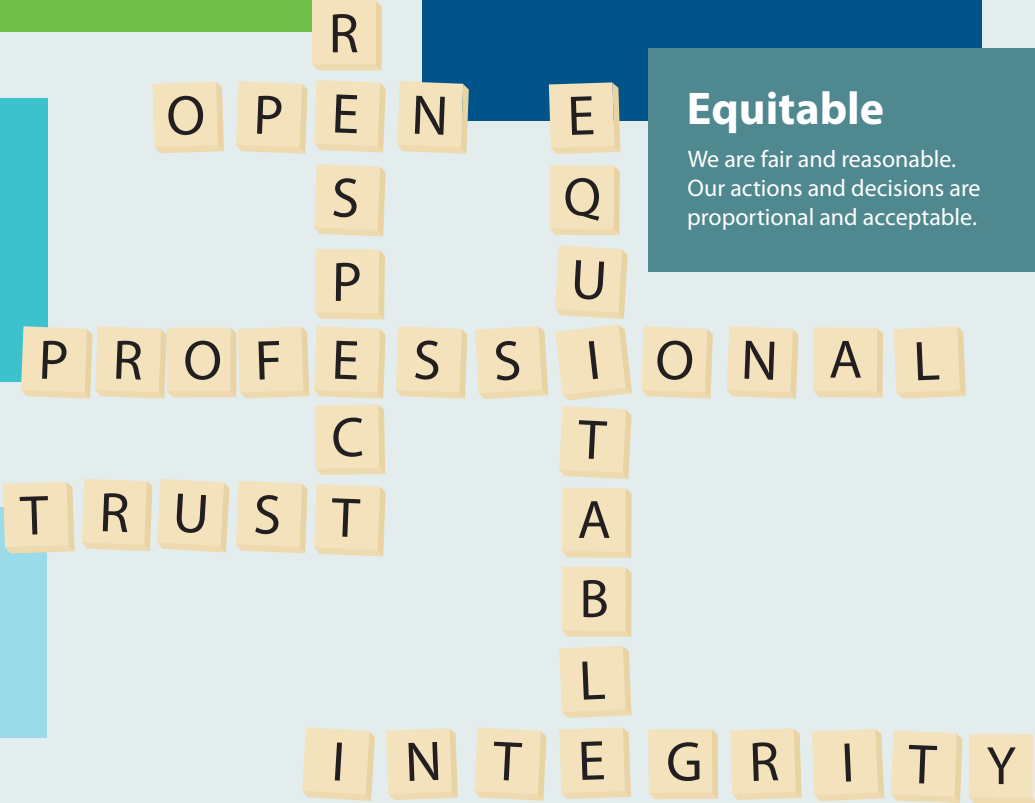
Respect for man and the environment is central to everything we do.  
We listen, are understanding and act in a humane manner. We use our resources in a sustainable and efficient way.

Open

Our communication is timely, customized, clear and transparent. We engage in constructive dialogue and pay attention to all interlocutors. We encourage participation and are open to the ideas of others.

Equitable

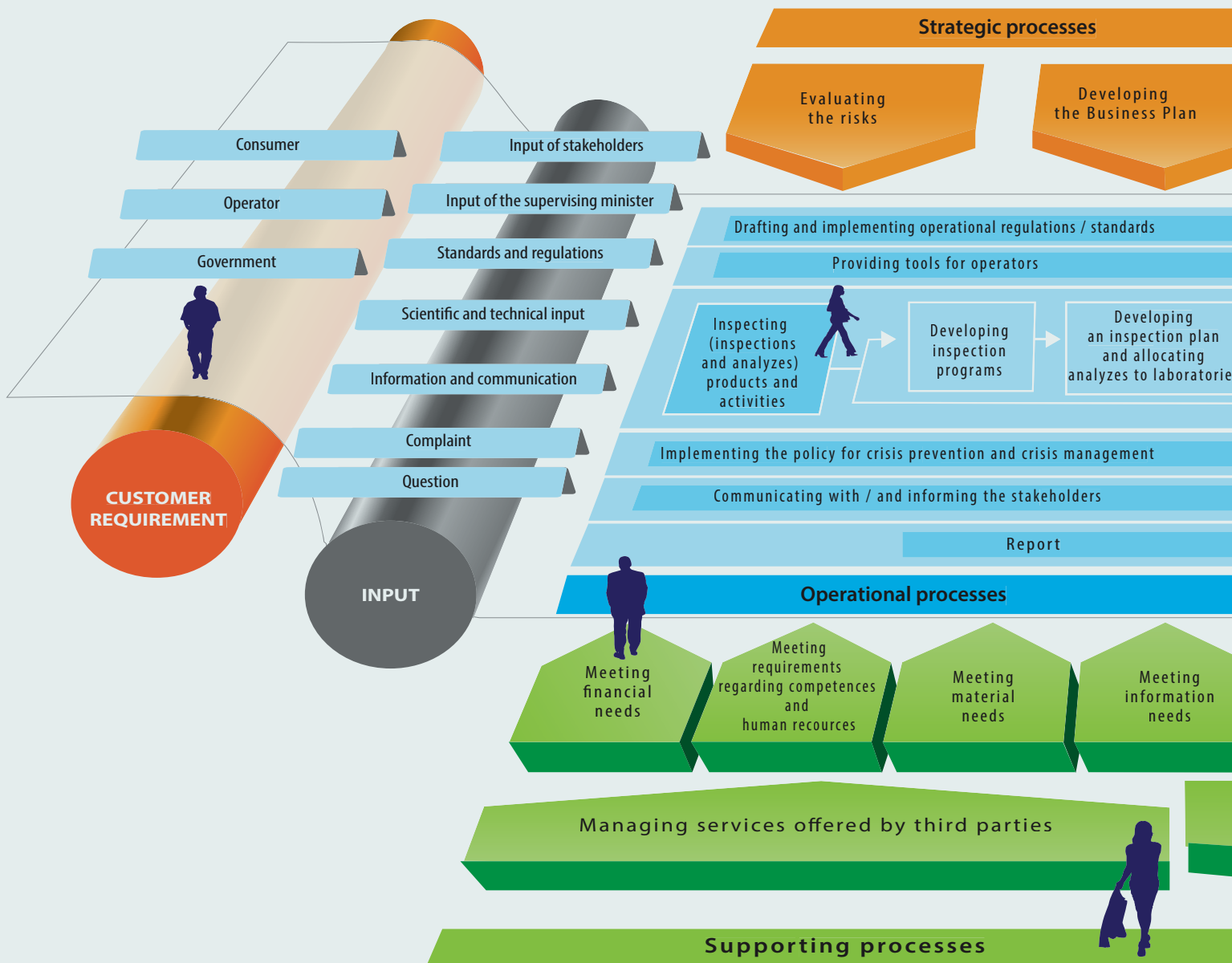
We are fair and reasonable. Our actions and decisions are proportional and acceptable.

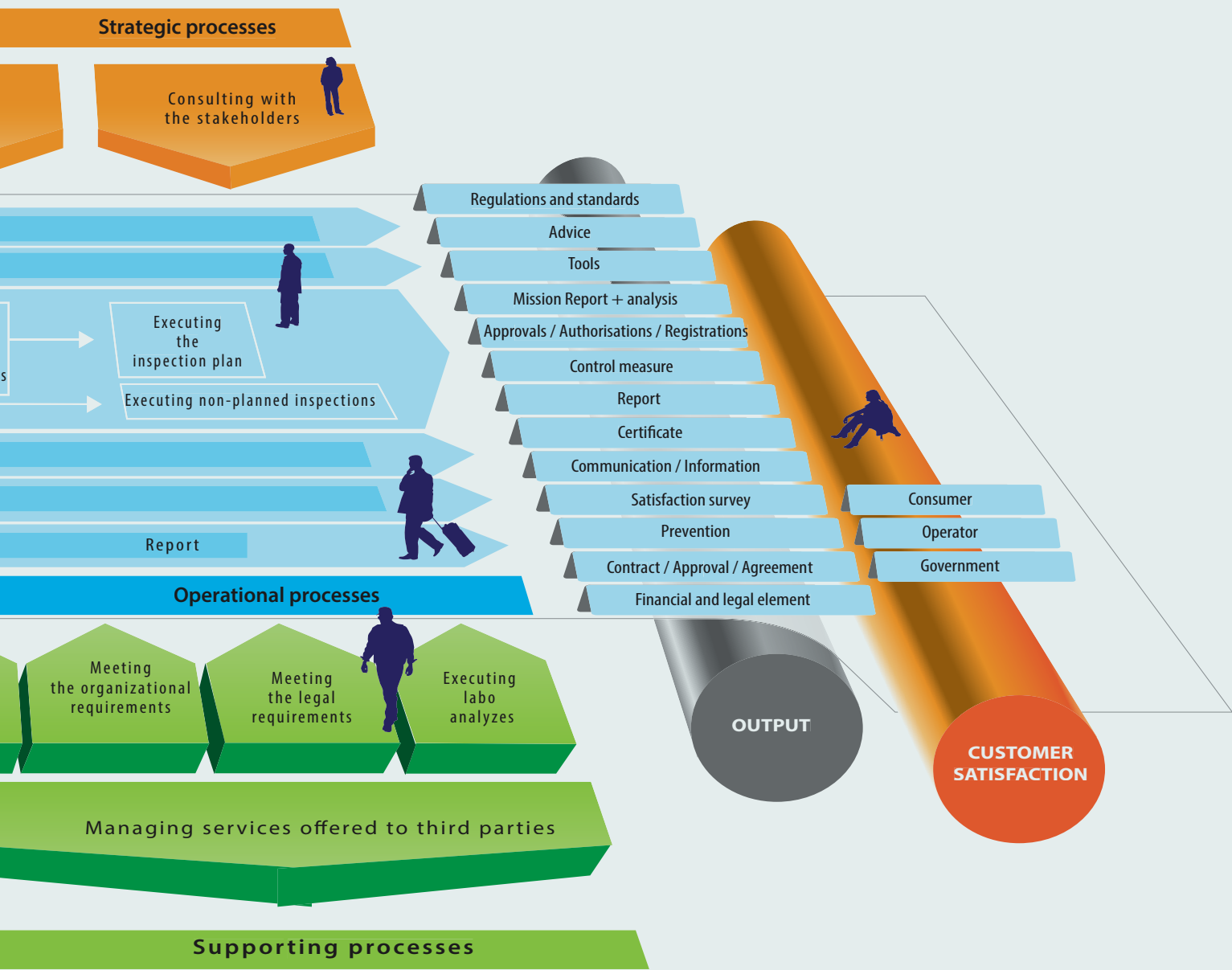


Integrity

We act in accordance with our values.  
We are honest, correct and treat confidential information with discretion. We provide services in a reliable and conscientious manner

## 1.5. The BFSA 's process model





## 1.6. Cutting the red tape

The BFSA strives to keep the regulations and the ensuing obligations as simple and accessible as possible. That is why a lot of efforts are being made, not only in terms of providing information and raising awareness, but also with regard to legislation and procedures.

Administrative simplification plays a key role in the business plans for the periods 2009-2011, 2012-2014 and 2015-2017. In 2015, a number of administrative simplifications were already realized.

The Agency's staff also implements measures for administrative simplifications in its daily activities.

### **Flexibility regarding self-checking in the B2C-sector**

The BFSA values small enterprises dearly. In this respect, small enterprises benefit from a considerable amount of flexibility regarding self-checking requirements. A number of important achievements are listed below:

- The Agency has taken over the management of the guides for the B2C-sector, which enables it to update and print the guides itself. In addition, these guides are made available to the FFBOs free of charge on the Agency's website.
- Quick start files were drawn up as an addition to the self-checking guides in the B2C-sector to clearly and unambiguously explain the most important points an FFBO has to take into account to meet legal requirements. New files are added as soon as the new legislation enters into force.
- In determining the contribution paid by the FFBOs, several activities were not taken into account to prevent self-checking systems which are not validated (yet) from having an influence on the amount of the contribution. This can concern new activities during the first year, certain activities which have not yet been included in certain guides, activities that only require a registration, for instance in the hotel and catering sector, the retail sector,...
- The possibility to avoid an administrative fine by having a self-checking system validated.
- The "direct supply" by the manufacturer of small amounts of primary products to the final user or to local retail businesses which deliver directly to the final consumer" is subject to lenient legal requirements (RD of 7 January 2014). For the direct sale of raw milk for example, whether or not through milk vending machines on the production premises, one need only acquire a registration for this activity. Belgium accepts a lowered analysis frequency (cell count, bacteriological count, antibiotics residues) for when supplied on a small scale.
- A number of FFBOs in the retail business are exempt from having to declare their products provided that they supply products of animal origin to other retail businesses and the activity remains marginal, local and limited.
- European regulations allow Member States to grant their approval to use milk with a high bacteriological count for the production of cheese with a ripening period of more than 60 days. Belgium has allowed this derogation by virtue of the Royal Decree of 30 November 2015 concerning the hygiene of foodstuffs of animal origin.



- The flexibility concerning HACCP in Belgium is laid down in the Ministerial Decree of 22 March 2013 regarding the flexibility for the implementation of self-checking and traceability in certain food chain establishments. FFBOs do not have to conduct risk analyses themselves and can immediately apply the self-checking guide. In this context only the corrective actions and measures taken to remedy non-compliances have to be registered. The traceability documents have to be kept for only 6 months after the product's expiration date or, in case the expiration date is absent, for 6 months beyond the production date instead of 2 years.
- The B2C sector may limit the number of registrations pertaining to self-checking. Registration is no longer required for cleaning and disinfection, pest control, trainings and complaints. Declarations of compliance are no longer required for materials that come into contact with foodstuffs and production files no longer have to be kept or drawn up for foodstuffs that are delivered directly to the consumer.
- The sampling frequency concerning microbiology (Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005) in the context of self-checking has to be determined by the operator based on the risk. However, the farm dairy sector is in favour of imposing only a minimum number of analyses. The self-checking guide for farm dairy requires a minimum of 2 samplings per year for each product category, so as to be able to conduct relevant analyses on each product. Belgium does not demand environment samples for the analysis of *Listeria* at dairy farms.
- European Regulation No 2073/2005 imposes a minimal sampling frequency for minced meat, meat preparations and mechanically separated meat and fresh poultry meat. The responsible authorities can exempt establishments that only produce small quantities of meat, meat preparations and fresh poultry meat from these sampling frequencies. In Belgium, the BFSA considers each meat retail business (a meat store, a butcher's shop) as an establishment that produces only small quantities of minced meat and meat preparations. The sampling frequency for these businesses was reduced to 1 analysis per year.

#### Electronic export certificates

A limited number of electronic export certificates have already been made available via the application BECERT in order to gradually introduce a stable and efficient system. Additional resources were provided to develop the application according to the needs of the exporters and the certifying officers and to rapidly expand the number of certificates that can be requested via BECERT.

### 1.7. Quality, safety, environment and internal control

In 2015, the BFSA has further fine-tuned its integrated system for managing quality, safety and the environment, which due to the synergy between its different components also serves as a working basis for the daily implementation of the internal control system.

The effective functioning of this system in the past year has allowed us to keep all of our certificates for the ISO 9001, ISO 17020, ISO 17025, ISO 17043 and ISO 17043 standards.

After a cost-benefit analysis, the EMAS-registration was abandoned, but environmental objectives were included in the Agency's general quality policy.

In 2015, the realization of the strategic objectives of the business plan for 2015-2017 and the ensuing operational objectives started to take off:

- The operational objectives laid down were either translated by all entities into projects that have to be executed by a certain date, or included as permanent performance indicators linked to processes whose critical indicators have to be complied with. Subsequently, the risk management system is reinforced through its systematic integration in the projects and processes. This entire process is included and monitored in a unique performance chart and gathers all the elements of the internal control chain.
- The processes intended to support the aforementioned objectives were represented schematically and inventoried in 2014, and early 2015 they were presented in the Agency's revised cartography of processes. The process approach is steadily taking shape and since 2015 has been actively contributing to the execution of organized, ethical, cost-saving, efficient and effective actions. The process approach is being implemented incrementally through various initiatives regarding communication, training and process improvement projects and also by means of trainings on process management.
- The role of Chief Information Officer, who is responsible for data reporting and data security, was assigned to the director of the staff department integration of business information.

## 1.8. Internal audit

From a methodological point of view the internal audit is an impartial assessment of the Agency's functioning which provides the management with the guarantee that its activities are being managed efficiently. Another important objective, from an organizational as well as from a technical point of view, is to offer possibilities for improvement.

Both the European Union (Regulation (EC) n° 882/2004) and the national government (Royal Decree of 17 August 2007 concerning the

internal audit activities in some services of the federal executive power) demand that internal audits be carried out. This also constitutes a strictly necessary step for the validation (certification or accreditation) of the quality management systems the BFSa uses (ISO 9001, ISO 17020, ISO 17025).

The internal audits are included in the multi-annual audit programme which is based on a risk analysis centred around 2 pillars:

- an audit universe of the ongoing processes in the BFSa (47 items),
- a sectoral audit universe based on Regulation 882/2004 and the Agency's business plan (40 items).

The audit programme for 2014 was distilled from the multi-annual planning for 2014-2016 and also takes into account:

- the audit universe as laid down in the European legislation
- the execution of two central follow-up audits,
- second party audits conducted by external partners: tasks and responsibilities that fall under the Agency's responsibility are assigned to these audit bodies.

In 2015, a total of 36 internal audits were carried out. The audit results can be found in the full annual report on our website.

## 1.9. External audits

### Audits by national authorities

The BFSA has further developed and updated its integrated quality, safety and environmental management system: following the external audits in 2015, the Agency kept its ISO 9001, ISO 17020, ISO 17025, ISO 17043 and ISO 14001 certifications.

### Audit by the European Commission

Each year, the direction in charge of audits and analyses concerning health and food of the Directorate-General Health and Food Safety of the European Commission (previously known as: the Food and Veterinary Office), which in this capacity is entrusted with the supervision of the proper execution of checks carried out by the competent authorities of the Member States, carries out a series of audits in Belgium in accordance with article 45 of Regulation (EC) N° 882/2004 on official controls.

In 2015, 1 information mission, 2 study visits and 4 audits took place:

- one mission aimed at gathering information on emerging risks for plant health, including surveillance measures.
- a study visit on the private certification schemes in the feed sector.
- a study visit on slaughterhouse hygiene,
- an audit of plant health checks at import,
- an audit of residue and contaminant checks on live animals, veterinary medicines and animal products,
- an audit of checks on the marketing and use of plant protection products.
- an audit of checks on microbiological contamination in primary production.

These missions, the reports of which are available on the website of the directorate-general Health and Food Safety of the European Commission, resulted in a number of recommendations which are subject to a joint follow-up by the different Belgian authorities involved.

Moreover, late 2015 Belgium was the subject of a general follow-up audit aimed at updating Belgium's country profile, which is available on the Commission's website, and going through the recommendations that were still open in the Country profile. Of the 50 open recommendations 36 could be closed.

### Inspections and audits by third countries (non-EU countries)

The BFSA is also regularly audited by third countries with a view to preserving and expanding Belgium's export markets.

In 2015, delegations from Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Malaysia and Turkey conducted an audit of the Belgian food safety system.

## 1.10. International profile

The BFSA is active internationally and has a network at its disposal which enables it to help shape European and international policies, ensure the image of Belgian products and thereby facilitate the export of Belgian products. The Agency is considered a highly performing authority which serves as an international example.

In 2015, the BFSA hosted 14 foreign delegations. During these delegations, the working methods and the missions of the BFSA were explained. Particular attention was paid to the preservation of Belgium's export markets and 52 bilateral agreements or certificates were concluded with 33 third countries.





# The BFSA at the service of consumers and business sectors

2





The consumer is at the center of the Agency's policy. The inspection programmes are aimed at ensuring a high level of food chain safety. Once the consumer has purchased the food, he or she takes on part of the responsibility. Therefore, it is important that consumers are informed about and made aware of all food safety aspects.

For several years now, the BFSa has been taking several initiatives to train and guide professionals in order to improve food safety and hygiene conditions. Prevention, awareness creation and information dissemination are the Agency's most important objectives.

#### Communication in figures

		2013	2014	2015
Press releases (including recalls of products consumers purchased and allergen warnings)		123 (44 %)	124 (50 %)	132 (63%)
Visit <a href="http://www.fasfc.be">www.fasfc.be</a>		988,239	1,080,544	1,360,599
Consumer Newsletter	Publications	5	4	3
	Subscribers	12,305	12,081	12,461
Consumer Contact Point	Questions	4,237	4,666	5,907
	Complaints	4,067	4,437	3,772
Vulgurization service	Sessions	287	316	337
	Participants	10,426	9,630	9,480
Brochures	Publications	8	8	9
Newsletters	Subscribers	2,261	3,078	3,733
	Publications	561	518	420
Newsletter for veterinarians	Subscribers	7,788	7,774	7,776
	Publications	27	45	17
Mediation Service	Complaints	120	100	89
Advisory Committee	Subscribers	39	39	39
	Plenary sessions	8	8	8
Facebook	Subscribers	1,201	2,272	4,114
	Published messages	77	122	122
Twitter	Subscribers	413	812	1,107
	Published messages	77	122	120










## 2.1. Publication of inspection results

At the end of the first semester of 2015, the BFSA started publishing the inspection results in the B2C-sector (business-to-consumer) on its website in the form of a simple scoring system. By doing so, the BFSA wants to meet the obligations concerning openness of government and at the same time offer a transparent system which provides consumers with comprehensible information on the hygienic and food safety conditions of food business operators in the distribution sector.

BFSA inspections are carried out based on standardized checklists. These checklists allow for harmonized and transparent checks.

These checklists are mainly technical documents which were developed to conduct efficient inspections. These documents are thus not easily understood by a layperson. For this reason the Agency believes that publishing filled out inspection checklists is not the best way to inform consumers. Consequently, the Agency has chosen to use an alternative publication method based on a score system which in a simple manner provides a general overview of the results by means of a global score. This score not only takes into account the basic inspections, but also factors in the gravity of the observed non-compliances and the actions taken by the food business operator to remedy the non-compliances. This system was developed in close consultation with the sector organizations, as well as with the consumer organizations and all of the other actors of the Agency's Advisory Committee.

SYMBOL visible in Foodweb		MEANING
Excellent		The FFBO has a SMileyor a certified sel-checking system for all of his B2C activities
Very good		During the last inspection or audit conducted by the BFSA (for all B2C activities), the FFBO obtained the result "favourable" or "favourable with remarks".
Good		During the last inspection the FFBO obtained an "unfavourable" result, but during a follow-up inspection he or she was able to show that the problems identified were solved. During the follow-up inspection, the FFBO consequently obtained the result "favourable" or "favourable with remarks".
Sufficient Preliminary assessment pending a follow-up inspection		During the last inspection, the FFBO obtained an unfavourable result and received a warning. He/she is waiting for a follow-up inspection.
To be improved Preliminary assessment pending a follow-up inspection		During the last inspection, the FFBO obtained an "unfavourable result" and received a procès-verbal (PV). He/ she is waiting for a follow-up inspection.
To be improved		During the last inspection, the FFBO obtained an «unfavourable» result and during the follow-up inspection, he or she was not able to prove that the problems identified were solved. The FFBO thus obtained the result «unfavourable» for the follow-up inspection and consequently obtained a PV (an official report).
No recent inspection		The FFBO has never been inspected before OR was inspected for the first time and obtained an unfavourable result. The FFBO is either awaiting a follow-up inspection OR the last inspection predates the basic inspection frequency established by the BFSA.

The score of each food business operator in the B2C-sector can be consulted on the Agency's FOODWEB website. The scores are published by means of symbols accompanied by a short description of their meaning.

The inspection results were published on Foodweb as of 30 June 2015. During the first month on average more than 100,000 pages were consulted each day. After August 1, on average 1,500 pages were still being consulted each day.

Additionally, the BFSa ensures the availability of detailed results concerning the latest inspections and analyses conducted at the premises of food business operators. These results only pertain to reports on official inspections and analyses in the framework of the Agency's control plan. The person who requests this information will be invited to the BFSa's central administration after filling out a request form that is available on the Agency's website. At the central administration, this person will get the opportunity to look up the results in the database and obtain a transcript thereof. In 2015, the Agency received 37 requests of this nature.

## 2.2. Contact point for consumers

The BFSa contact point is intended for consumers. Every year, the contact point handles thousands of questions and complaints.



In 2015, the contact point has received 3,372 complaints, which is a 15% decrease compared to 2014. This decrease can mainly be explained by the fact that animal welfare has become a Regional responsibility as of January 1, 2015 and thus no longer falls under the responsibility of the BFSa. The number of complaints regarding the smoking ban has also decreased.

These complaints mainly pertain to the hygiene of rooms and people (1,191 complaints in 2015), possible food poisoning (838) and production and conservation methods of foodstuffs (866). Each complaint leads to an investigation by a Provincial Control Unit (PCU).

## 2.3. Consumer Newsletter

In 2015, the BFSa has published 3 consumer newsletters. These newsletters deal with current topics and food safety-related issues and were sent to 12,461 subscribers. The newsletters are also published on our consumer website.

## 2.4. Targeted checks

Each year, unannounced targeted checks are organized in the distribution sector. The results of these checks are communicated by means of a press release. These actions take place nation-wide and are not announced in advance.

In 2015, 3 targeted actions were organized.

### **Frying oil action**

The Agency tested 193 units of frying oil in 117 mobile businesses that use frying oil to bake foodstuffs such as chips, frikandels (typical Dutch and Belgian snack, minced meat hot dog sausages), egg rolls, meatballs, fish sticks, meat brochettes, fritters, churros and Dutch doughnuts.

An official report (PV) was drawn up if the temperature was higher than 190°C and/or if the percentage of polymerized triglycerides exceeded the 10% limit. A total of 10 PVs were drawn up for non-compliant frying oil.

Studies show that excessive temperatures and prolonged use of the frying oil for frying foodstuffs can cause the development of harmful chemical substances, acrylamide among others, and can thus be detrimental to the consumer's health. Consequently, it is essential that the quality standards laid down in the regulations are met.

We seized the opportunity with this action to inform the consumers on this subject and provide them with some useful tips.

### **Meat salad actions- preparations in butcher shops**

This action was intended to assess the microbiological quality of meat salads. During this action, meat salads prepared by the butchers themselves were sampled.

A total of 110 meat salads were sampled to conduct microbiological analyses. One sample contained pathogens. No pathogenic agents or toxins were found in the other samples. The analyses did reveal that one third of the samples contained microbiological contaminants.

Therefore, it is important to use fresh products and maintain good personal hygiene when preparing meat salads. The use of meat that has been preserved too long or a lack of hygiene may lead to the presence of undesirable micro-organisms and bacteria.

### **Mussels action**

A special action was organized to verify the microbiological quality of mussels.

With this action, 110 samples were taken of uncooked mussels in the hotel and catering industry. An excessive level of E. coli was found in 3 of the samples, which might indicate a less than favourable quality of the water in which the mussels are grown.

That is why the authorities of the country of origin were notified by means of a RASFF message (European rapid alert system).

## 2.5. Company Discovery Day

For more than 20 years now, a Company Discovery Day is held on the first Sunday of October all over Belgium. The Agency has already participated in this event for three years in a row. On October 4, 2015, an interactive "Food Safety Tour" was organized in the Food Safety Centre in Brussels.

This "Food Safety Tour" consisted of a route with multiple stops. At the first stop, the visitors got the opportunity to take on the role of a BFSa inspector. Among other things, they were familiarized with a colour test (malachite green test) used to detect the banned preservative sulphite in minced meat, controls on foodstuff labels, regulations that have to be respected for processing insects in foodstuffs (insect-based appetizers were also provided for the more adventurous participants), the temperatures at which fresh or deep-frozen products have to be stored and an example of an inspection in a slaughterhouse and a butcher's shop.

In a miniature laboratory, the visitors became acquainted with the 5 BFSA laboratories and they learned how a laboratory functions, which analyses have to be carried out and which results can be obtained.

There was also a stand specifically devoted to plant and animal diseases, such as brown rot in potatoes and rabies in dogs and cats. In addition, the visitors also received information on the activities of the BFSA's Scientific Committee and its efforts to support the Agency's missions.

Belgium imports and exports a wide variety of foodstuffs, animals, animal products to and from countries outside of Europe. The Food Safety Tour stopped at a virtual border inspection post where the visitors could see for themselves that all of these "exotic" products can only enter our country after inspections, in the country of origin as well as upon their arrival in Europe. Shipments that are not up-to-standard are confiscated.

The Food Safety Tour ended at the stand of the Communication Department where visitors could have their checklist corrected (a questionnaire in "BFSA format" they had to fill out during the tour). Here the visitors also received more information on the Agency's communication policy (the contact point, the websites for consumers and businesses, our newsletter, our Facebook page, etc.)



## 2.6. Self-checking systems and sector guides

Since 2005, all FFBOs have to implement a self-checking system to offer better protection to consumers. In order to help operators meet this requirement, the professional organizations draw up self-checking guides which have to be validated by the BFSa.

In order to facilitate the implementation of self-checking in businesses, a number of leniencies to the self-checking requirements were granted. Until early 2013, these leniencies were limited to SMEs in the distribution sector, the hotel and catering industry and to micro enterprises in the processing sector. However, since March 2013, these leniencies have been extended to all B2C establishments by means of a new ministerial decree, regardless of the establishment's size. These leniencies allow establishments to implement the HACCP procedures described in the guide, so that they will no longer have to conduct their own hazard analyses. This makes it easier to implement self-checking systems in small businesses that have little human resources and scientific expertise at their disposal (<http://www.favv-afscs.fgov.be/autocontrole-nl/versoepelingen/>).



Self-checking guides for businesses that deliver directly to the consumer (B2C) are managed by the BFSa and drawn up in consultation with the sectors involved, printed and published on the Agency's website.

<http://www.favv-afscs.fgov.be/autocontrole-nl/gidsen/distributie/>

They were complemented with quick start files.

<http://www.afscs.be/autocontrole-nl/gidsen/qsfiles/>

In 2014, the BFSA introduced a procedure that makes it possible for private system owners to demonstrate equivalence with the guides. Equivalence means that in case of a favourable audit based on the equivalent system no additional audit is required based on the relevant guide, but that the audited business can still benefit from a bonus on its contribution to the BFSA and a reduction of the inspection frequency.

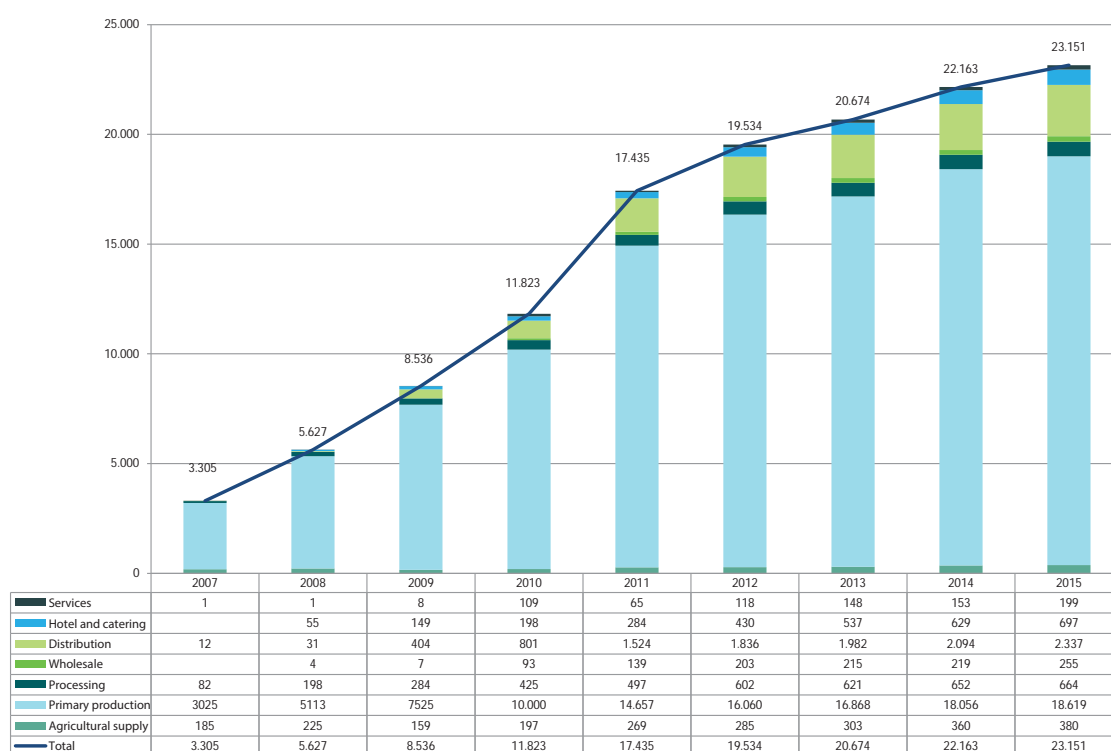
FFBOs who have had their self-checking system validated, benefit from a reduced inspection frequency by the BFSA and a 75% reduction on their annual contribution. The audits are based on the approved self-checking guides and are carried out by means of checklists that were drawn up by the BFSA in consultation with the representatives of the professional associations involved.

In 2015, the specific checklists that apply to the B2C sector were replaced by a generic checklist, which entails a strong simplification for all parties involved. For a few activities which are not covered by a guide yet (a guide is available for more than 99% of the FFBOs), the BFSA has developed specific tools to help these businesses.

In the sectors for which a guide is at hand, the audits are possibly carried out by the BFSA, but are generally carried out by one of the 14 accredited and recognized certification bodies (OCIs).

The number of businesses that have their self-checking system validated continues to increase. This testifies to the effectiveness of the policy.

By the end of 2015, 23,151 establishments had a validated self-checking system covering all of their activities.



Just like last year, the majority of these validations can be found in the primary production sector, followed by the distribution sector.





In 2012, the BFSA Smiley, which up to that point was only intended for restaurants and institutional kitchens, was extended to all establishments in the B2C sector that have a validated self-checking system. By the end of 2012, 1,262 business units displayed a BFSA smiley. By the end of 2015, this number had risen to 2,947. The smiley is awarded by the OCI that conducts the audit and remains valid for 3 years. The list of businesses that have a smiley can be consulted on the website: <http://www.afsca.be/smiley>.

## 2.7. Consultation

The Agency's Advisory Committee issues opinions on all issues pertaining to policies adopted or to be adopted by the BFSA, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Minister or the Chief Executive Officer. The Committee also acts as a consultative platform for the BFSA and its partners, where fully transparent discussions can be held on current affairs, the evolution of regulations, funding, export impediments, etc. The Committee is composed of 39 members representing the main business sectors, consumer associations and the authorities concerned.

The BFSA also regularly consults with the sectors and the national and international institutions, more precisely the European Commission and the OIE (World organisation for Animal Health). Technical consultations between every professional association and the services of the Agency's DG Control Policy are also held multiple times a year.

Local platforms for cooperation with other services, such as police, customs and local governments are set up within the provincial control units to carry out common actions more easily.



## 2.8. Training and guidance of professionals

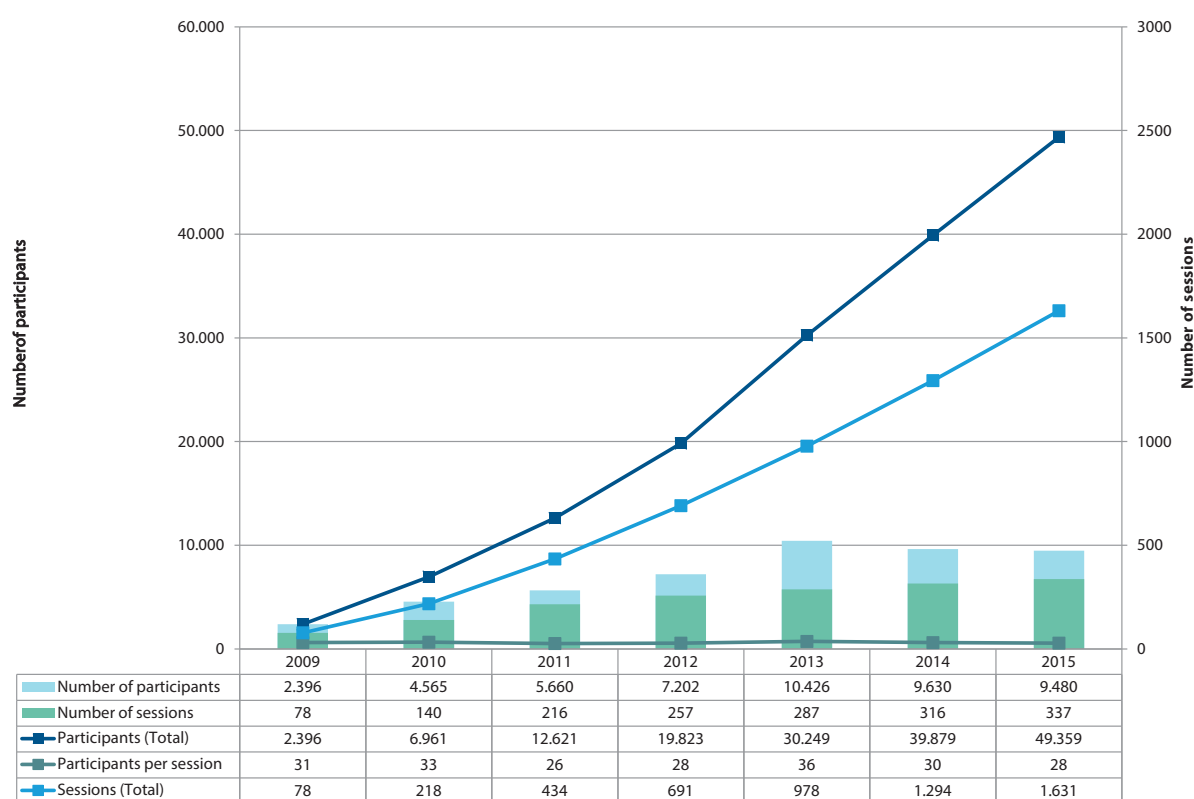
A number of initiatives are listed below that are aimed at encouraging FFBOs to follow trainings and obtain information.

- The checklists used during inspections are published on the Agency's website, which gives FFBOs the opportunity to see exactly what an inspection entails.
- Each year, the BFSA carries out about ten local control actions that are announced beforehand in the B2C sector. In regard to these actions the BFSA, in collaboration with the municipalities involved, always organizes preliminary training sessions to which all FFBOs are invited.
- The BFSA's Vulgarization service organizes free trainings for groups of FFBOs who deliver directly to consumers. More precisely, it focuses on small businesses that have difficulties understanding regulations.
- Since early 2011, hotel and catering industry operators have the opportunity to have their administrative fines cancelled, provided that the entire staff of the establishment concerned attends a training session by the Vulgarization service specifically organized for this purpose.
- Educational materials are made available to the FFBOs free of charge: a syllabus, a film explaining how an inspection in the hotel and catering industry takes place, brochures targeted at specific sectors to inform FFBOs and explain how an inspection takes place.
- The BFSA makes the self-checking guides available to the B2C sector free of charge in order to provide FFBOs of this sector with the necessary information and to help them attain good hygienic practices and implement their own self-checking system. "Quick Start Files" are also made available.
- The checks carried out receive individual follow-up. In case of unfavourable checks, the sanctions depend on the gravity of the non-compliances that were found: a warning, a procès-verbal (official report) of infringement accompanied by an administrative fine, (temporary) closure and/or seizure of non-compliant products and the initiation of a procedure for suspension or withdrawal of the establishment's authorization or approval. Follow-up inspections are also carried out in order to verify whether FFBOs who have received a sanction (PV, warning) and have taken action to comply with regulations continue to do so in the long run: a certain percentage of these FFBOs (which differs according to the activities) is therefore checked prior to the next inspection that is to take place based on a predetermined inspection frequency.

## Information service

The BFSA's Information service has been operational since 1/9/2008 and helps FFBOs who have direct contact with consumers (hotel and catering industry, retail trade), to comply with regulations. To this end, the Agency organizes training sessions for groups of FFBOs

Since 2010, trainings for students and people in charge of hotel, butchery and bakery schools were organized in collaboration with the Regions and the Communities.



## Training sessions as an alternative for administrative fines

To improve the level of hygiene in the hotel and catering industry (restaurants, pita houses, chip shops, snack bars,...) since 1/1/2011 the BFSA, in collaboration with the professional associations of the hotel and catering industry, has been offering FFBOs the opportunity to have their administrative fines cancelled, provided that they attend a training session organized by the BFSA's information service. This action only applies to the first fine and does not apply to fines concerning the smoking ban.

In 2015, 52 training sessions (49 in 2013, 41 in 2014) were organized for 1,460 participants (1,108 in 2014).

## 2.9. Export support

Businesses are increasingly involved in export and expect government support in this respect. The increasing demand for opening export markets and the increasing importance of sanitary and phytosanitary obstacles in export require a proactive approach, more extensive cooperation between the different authorities and the corporate world as well as an efficient use of available resources. In Europe as well as in the rest of the world, governments and companies are faced with the same challenges.

Consequently, the BFSA has taken several actions that are geared towards improving the service provision to Belgian exporters. Among other things, the BFSA has taken the initiative to develop a common approach to promoting export in close consultation with all of the partners involved (companies, federal and regional administrations).

### **Extra means to support Belgian export**

Belgian businesses are increasingly involved in export, which has led to an increasing number of requests for opening new export markets. Moreover, importing third countries often take very strict sanitary and phytosanitary measures which might constitute a barrier for Belgian exporters. In order to meet this increasing demand and allow the BFSA to continue to fulfil its export supporting tasks, the Council of Ministers has freed up additional resources for export services, more precisely €1.47 million per year as of 2016.

A large part of these financial resources will be used to hire additional staff to reinforce the Agency's export supporting services. In addition to handling export documents, the Agency will also pay more attention to its international profile. The Belgian food safety system is an export asset that has to be emphasized in trade negotiations with third countries.

The Agency will invest more in partnerships with the authorities of these third countries. This will enhance mutual trust and can thus facilitate trade between both countries. Several public institutions and other partners, such as professional associations, are involved in export services. Therefore, the coordination of these efforts is crucial. The BFSA will also continue these efforts.

### **Specific sectoral sampling plans in the framework of the export to third countries**

The requirements of third countries often differ from the prevailing European and national legislation. Exporters have to guarantee that they meet these requirements by means of their self-checking system. A few professional associations have drawn up a sectoral sampling plan to verify whether the products that are intended for export actually meet the product standards of the country of destination. These sampling plans are revised and validated annually by the Agency.

The Association of Belgian Horticultural Cooperatives (VBT) and the exporters of fruit and vegetables (Fresh Trade Belgium) have been using a sampling plan for several years now to prove that the products meet the Russian and Japanese requirements for pesticide residues. The Belgian Compound Feed Industry Association (BEMEFA-APFACA) has extended its sampling plan with guarantees regarding radioactivity for Belarus and Kazakhstan in order to ensure the certification of feed that is exported to Macedonia, the Russian Federation, Belarus and Kazakhstan. The Belgian Meat Federation (FEBEV), the Belgian Confederation of the Dairy Industry (BCZ-CBL) and the gelatin manufacturers also guarantee product conformity for the Russian and the Chinese market by means of a sectoral sampling plan.

## BECERT

BECERT is an application that is intended to digitalize the certification process for the export to third countries in the framework of administrative simplification, traceability and fraud control.

Since 5 May 2014, BECERT has been operational in the provinces of Antwerp and West Flanders for the export of poultry meat. BECERT will gradually be extended to other provinces and to other products.

BECERT provides for the possibility to:

- request, create, save, print and issue export certificates,
- consult the export certificates that were issued,
- register all of the information pertaining to a specific certificate in one database,
- gebruiksvriendelijk, veilig en efficiënt te zijn,
- work in an ergonomic, safe and efficient way, by linking BECERT to other databases, by improving the quality of the data.

In a first stage, BECERT will be used to digitalize demands and to issue export certificates.

In a later stage, BECERT will also enable the electronic provision of certificate data to third countries.

## 2.10. Crisis prevention and crisis management

Preventing incidents in the food chain is one of the Agency's main concerns. Despite all of the efforts being made in this respect – by the government as well as by FFBOs– reality shows that it is not possible to entirely prevent incidents in the food chain and outbreaks of certain animal and plant diseases. Consequently, the BFSa's crisis prevention policy is not entirely aimed at trying to prevent incidents. The Agency also pays a lot of attention to limiting the effects of incidents. The crisis prevention and crisis management department contributes to limiting these effects in several ways.

- Capturing signals: improving the capturing of potential crisis signals is one of the projects the BFSa launched in 2011. The signals intended here are elements of information that might predict an impending incident or a crisis. In this respect, it is important to capture and recognize these signals as soon as possible, so as to ensure an appropriate reaction.
- Simulation exercises: simulation exercises are the best way to keep expertise concerning incident management in the food chain up-to-date. Such expertise is not only important for the BFSa (training and exercises for the Agency's staff), but also for the operators.
- Cooperation with the Government Crisis Centre (CGCCR): within the federal framework, the CGCCR plays a pivotal role when it comes to emergency planning and crisis management. The BFSa relies a great deal on the Crisis Centre and the other structures that are provided for in the federal emergency plan (the governors, civil security, the police, etc.) to help manage major incidents in the food chain. The BFSa regularly participates in exercises that are organized by the CGCCR, especially nuclear exercises.

- Operational means: managing an incident or a crisis in the food chain sometimes requires special tools and equipment. Such tools create new avenues for crisis control or allow for a more efficient incident management. Depending on market opportunities, the BFSA either purchases equipment or tools or it signs waiting contracts that ensure a guaranteed provision of the service or delivery of the equipment (for example: a contract for processing poultry, an antigen bank or a vaccine against animal diseases: foot-and-mouth disease, Q fever, etc.).

## 2.11. Mediation Service

The mediation service was founded in 2005 in the spirit of open government and is characterized by the complete impartiality of its decisions. The mediation service handles all complaints pertaining to the functioning of the BFSA. This service offers a listening ear to all partners of the BFSA, in the first place to FFBOs. The information obtained via these channels allows the Agency to continuously improve its work methods.

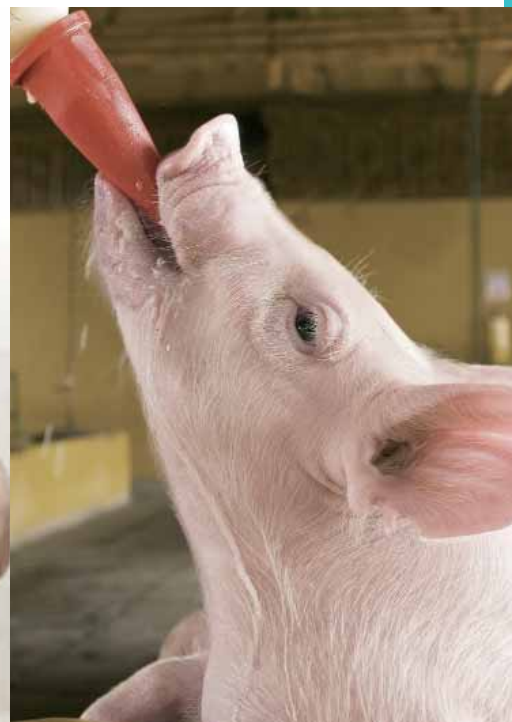
In 2015, the mediation service processed 89 complaints, more than half of which pertained to inspections conducted by the BFSA and the financing of these inspections (challenges to invoices contributions or fees). Ninety-five percent of these complaints were handled within 2 months and less than twenty-five percent of the complaints were found to be partially or entirely justified.

If the analysis of a complaint points to a structural problem within the BFSA, the mediation service communicates a suggestion for improvement to the Agency's management. In 2015, the Agency identified 6 items to be remedied, which will be monitored.

In 2015, the Agency also received 41 requests for information, mainly with regard to the interpretation of the Belgian and European regulations.







# **Our core business: Inspections**

3





Since it was founded in 2000, the Belgian Food Safety Agency has been conducting inspections in the entire food chain, from farm to table.

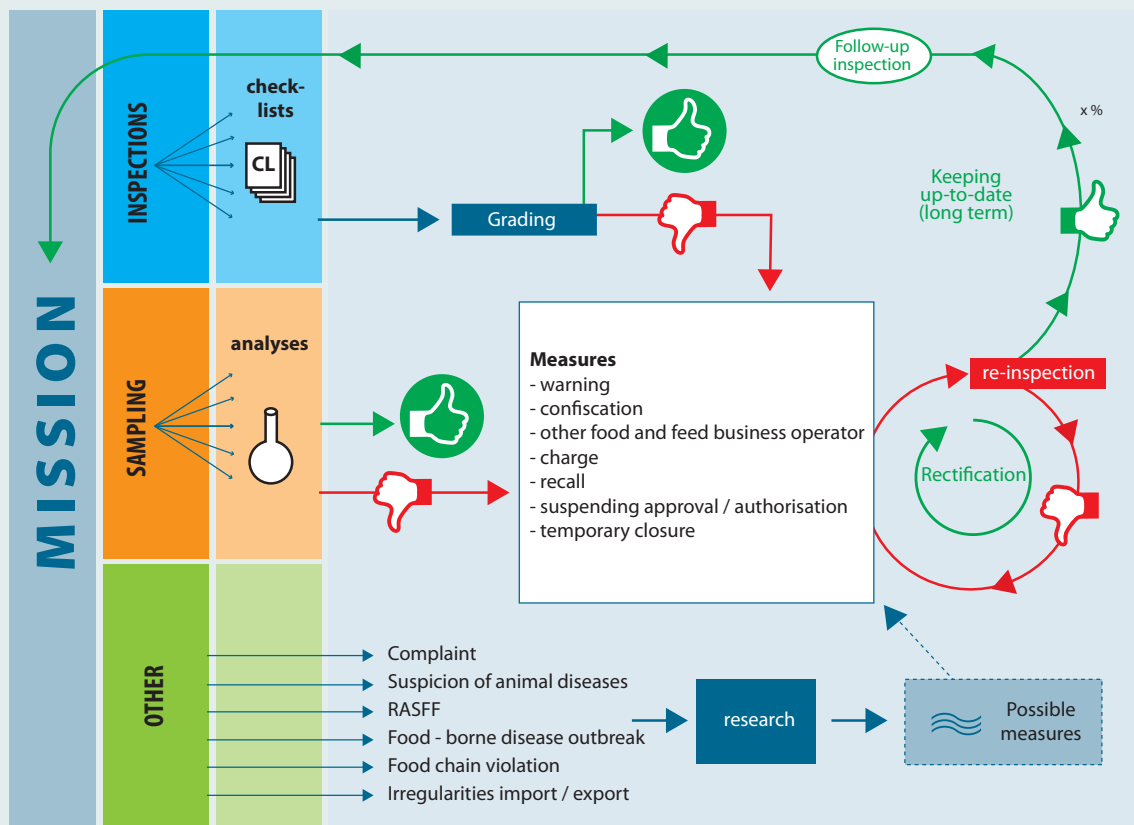
By now, most consumers, self-employed workers and businesses have heard of the BFSA, but the Agency's activities are less known. However, a lot of information is made available via the Agency's website.

### MANCP

The BFSA has drawn up a multi-annual national integrated control plan (MANCP) in the framework of Regulation (EC) n° 882/2004. This plan describes the strategy and organization aimed at guaranteeing an efficient control of the entire food chain. In drawing up this plan, the Agency focuses on a high level of food chain safety by the efficient use of the available staff.

In addition to the BFSA, other instances are also involved with the MANCP, among which the FPS Public Health, the FAMHP (Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products), the Multidisciplinary Hormones Cell, the FANC (the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control), the Customs and Excise Department, the Regions and the FPS Economy, as well as various external inspection bodies. The validity period and the strategic and operational objectives of the MANCP are the same as those of the BFSA's business plan. The MANCP is available on <http://www.favv-afsca.be/about/mancp/>





Each business active in the food chain, which the BFSa refers to as an “food and feed business operator (FFBO)”, has to be registered at the BFSa and has to be inspected systematically by the Agency at a predetermined frequency: <http://www.favv.be/businessplan-en/2015-2017/>

If an inspector goes to a place of business to carry out an inspection, a sampling or a specific investigation assignment, this is referred to as a **mission**.

During an **inspection** the FFBO’s activities are checked. The inspector uses a checklist (or multiple checklists) to objectively assess all of the items to be checked. Each item to be checked is given a certain weight. These checklists are available to the public and can be found on the Agency’s website: <http://www.favv.be/checklists-fr/>.

This way everyone knows well beforehand which items will be checked and which importance=weight has to be assigned to each item to be inspected. In addition, they have other tools at their disposal, for example the brochure: “The way to a flawless BFSa inspection”: <http://www.favv.be/publicationsthematiques/en-route-vers-la-reussite-dun-controle.asp>

During an inspection, samples can also be taken which are sent to a laboratory for analysis: **the sampling**.

It is also possible that an inspector visits a business for a **specific assignment**, which is subsumed under the heading “miscellaneous” in the scheme, for example because of a European warning, collective food poisoning, an incident in the food chain, an irregularity during the import or export of a product or following a complaint submitted by a consumer.

The end result can either be **good = compliant** (favourable, with or without remarks), to everyone’s satisfaction, or **not good = non-compliant** (unfavourable). In the latter case, measures will be taken. These measures can range from a warning to a PV (procès-verbal), seizure of a product or a temporary closure, as required by the situation and if the health of the consumers is being compromised. In case FFBOs continue to be obstinate, a withdrawal of their approval or authorization may even be considered. Each less than favourable result is always followed by a **re-inspection** paid for by the operator until everything is up-to-code.

In the long term, follow-up inspections are also carried out to make sure that the business remains compliant and does not return to its old ways. Measures are also taken in the case of non-compliant sampling results. For instance, if a product poses a risk to consumer health, all products of the same batch can be recalled or destroyed, the work method can be reassessed, and so on.

Following specific investigation assignments, measures can possibly also be taken.

At the end of each inspection, the inspector and the FFBO go through the list of items inspected, focussing especially on the explanation of the unfavourable results.

Each inspection requires the mutual respect of both parties, the inspector and the FFBO. The inspector who visits the business has made a commitment to act with integrity and impartiality. He or she has signed the Code of Conduct for Inspectors: <http://www.afsca.be/publicationsthematiques/Charte-controleur.asp>

### 3.1. Inspection results

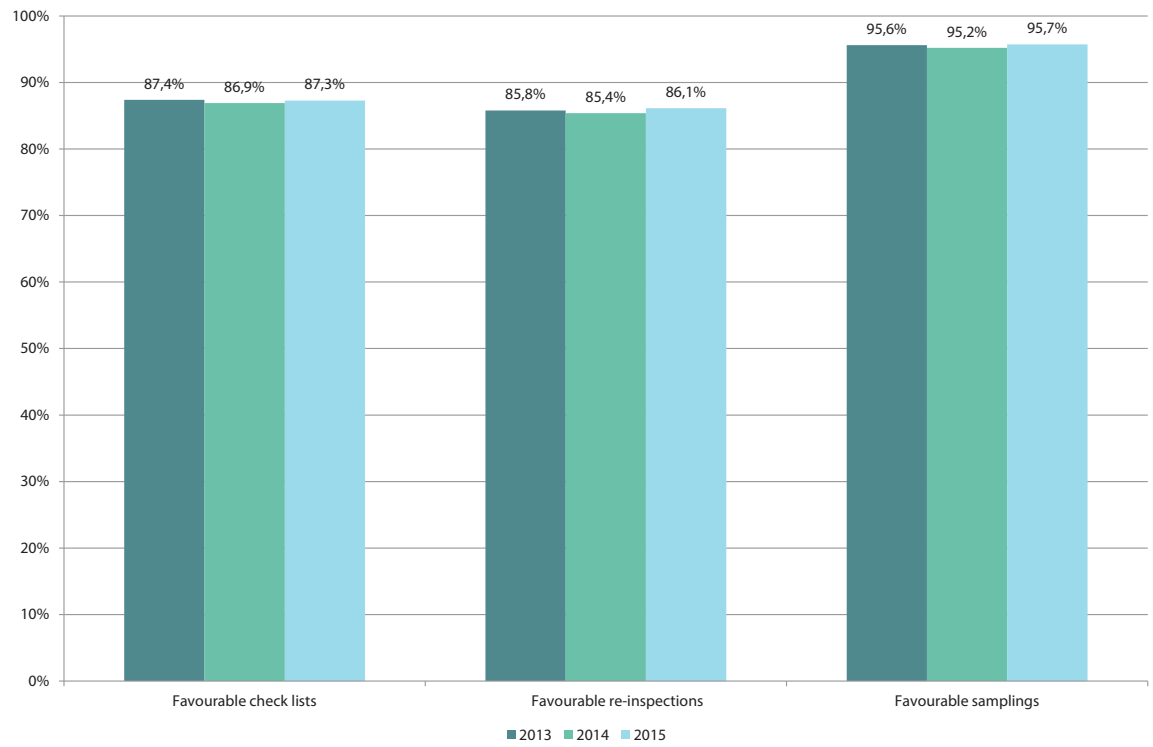
NUMBER OF MISSIONS	NUMBER OF FFBOS
122.720	68.816



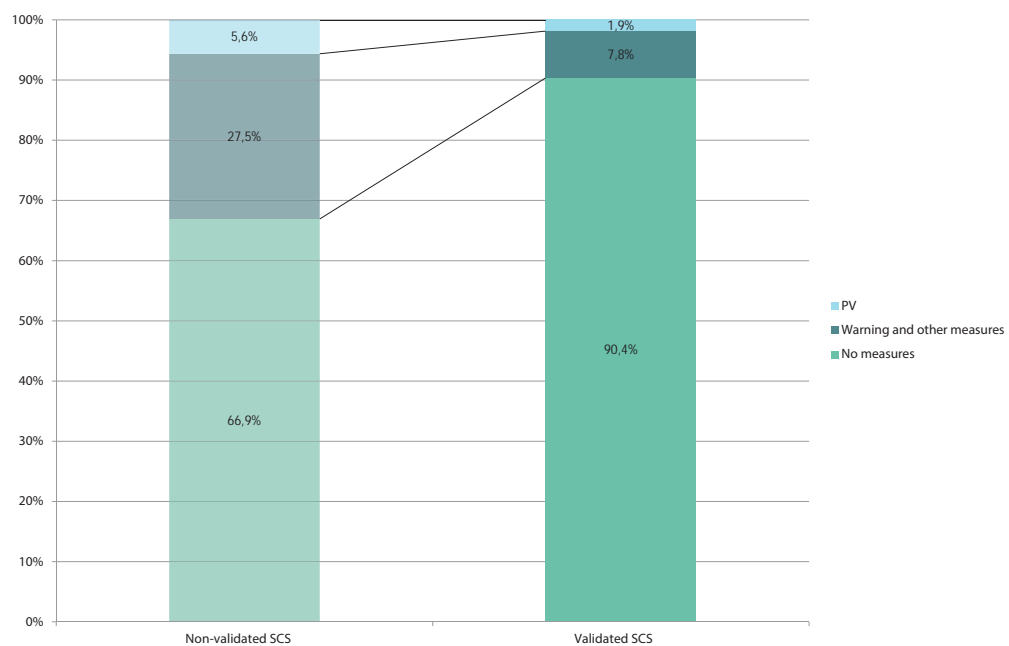
During a mission, various types of checks (inspections, samplings and other checks) can be carried out simultaneously. Consequently, the total number of missions is thus smaller than the sum of the different checks.



### Inspection results



The inspection results are considerably better in those businesses that have a validated self-checking system (SCS).



Results of the checklists of all sectors

	2014	2015	2015 VS. 2014 (%)	COMPLIANCE 2014 (%)	COMPLIANCE 2015 (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	57,358	54,270	-5.4%	75.5%	78.3%
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene (prior to granting the approval)	395	490	+24.1%	93.9%	92.4%
Self-checking system	23,799	25,456	+7.0%	75.5%	78%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	39,445	39,744	+0.8%	91.2%	90.1%
Compulsory notification	27,841	30,727	+10.4%	98.2%	97.9%
Packaging and labelling (including trade norms)	11,339	11,405	+0.6%	87.5%	86.5%
Packaging material	631	494	-21.7%	89.9%	84.2%
Animal by-products not intended for human consumption	4,858	4,641	-4.5%	91.0%	93.8%
Means of transport	1,734	1,830	+5.5%	98.6%	98.3%
Smoking ban	15,006	13,436	-10.5%	96.0%	95.2%
Phytosanitary checks	2,902	3,057	+5.3%	Not applicable	
Pesticides	2,658	2,653	-0.2%	89.1%	88.5%
Animal health	1,429	1,098	-23.2%	97.1%	97.4%
Animal welfare	10,886	9,910	-9.0%	97.4%	Not applicable
Medicines and veterinary business guidance	5,922	5,322	-10.1%	97.5%	97.6%
Epidemiological surveillance	3,639	3,391	-6.8%	94.9%	94.2%
Export approval	123	129	+4.9%	97.6%	96.9%
Administrative data operators	5,518	48,408	+777.3%	84.2%	84.8%
Foodstuff by-products	-	241	-	-	97.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>215,483</b>	<b>256,702</b>	<b>+19.1%</b>	<b>86.7%</b>	<b>87.5%</b>



### Results of the analyses

	NUMBER OF SAMPLINGS 2015	COMPLIANT SAMPLINGS 2014	COMPLIANT SAMPLINGS 2015	NUMBER OF MEASURES TAKEN 2015
Pathogenic Micro-organisms	20,480	95.4%	95.6%	196
Veterinary medicines and prohibited substances	16,746	98.8%	99.1%	58
Indicator organisms	9,089	90.8%	91.3%	152
Phytosanitary checks	8,142	90.4%	92.5%	131
Residues of pesticides	3,799	95.7%	97.2%	94
Additives and aromas	2,965	99.4%	99.1%	9
Dioxins and PCBs	2,495	99.8%	99.9%	1
Quality - compound	2,406	93.1%	93.3%	124
Heavy metals	2,136	98.8%	99.3%	9
Mycotoxins	2,022	98.6%	97.9%	39
BSE	1,607	96.6%	97.8%	5
Other contaminants	1,217	98.1%	97.9%	8
Migration from contact materials	806	99.5%	98.5%	9
PAHCs	674	99.5%	100%	
GMOs	402	99.1%	99.0%	3
Radioactivity	182	100%	100%	
Allergens	177	97.3%	99.4%	1
Marine biotoxins and histamine	133	99.2%	100%	
Irradiation	121	99.1%	99.2%	1
Other prohibited substances	42	77.3%	69.0%	7
Miscellaneous	12,467	97.4%	97.9%	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>88,108</b>	<b>96.4%</b>	<b>96.5%</b>	<b>916</b>

A detailed description of all the inspections carried out by the BFSA would be beyond the scope of this report. However, the inspection results can be consulted in the full activity report for 2015 and are available on the website [www.afsca.be](http://www.afsca.be) A few notable results are described in the following chapters.





## 3.2. Primary production

### Plant production

*Results of the 6,360 missions carried out at the premises of 5,177 commercial plant growers*

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Traceability (identification and registration included)	3,655	97.3%
Compulsory notification	3,387	99.7%
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	3,141	97.4%
Phytosanitary checks - physical checks	3,057	Not applicable
Pesticides (possession and use)	2,653	88.5%
Infrastructure and equipment (prior to granting the approval)	5	80.0%
Self-checking system	11	90.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,852</b>	<b>96.1%</b>

### Measures

	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Warnings	269
Seizures	257
Measures following non-compliances at another FFBO's premises.	18
PVs (official reports)	190
Miscellaneous	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>778</b>

The results are similar to those of 2014, except for inspections on infrastructure, equipment and hygiene (-4.8%). The most important infringements pertained to:

- keeping records on the use of fertilizers, soil improvers, nutrient substrates that contain animal by-products,
- the storage and disposal of dangerous substances (pesticides, biocides, fertilizers, lubricants, fuel,...),
- cleanliness of the workrooms.



## Animal production

Results of the 8,181 missions carried out in 7,550 livestock holdings

	AANTAL CHECKLISTS	GUNSTIGE CHECKLISTS
Traceability (identification and registration included)	8,878	88.2%
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	8,282	97.9%
Animal welfare	5,738	Not applicable
Medicines and business guidance	5,322	97.6%
Epidemiological surveillance	3,391	94.2%
Animal health	1,098	97.4%
Compulsory notification	2,535	99.9%
Self-checking system	81	98.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,587</b>	<b>94.7%</b>

## Measures

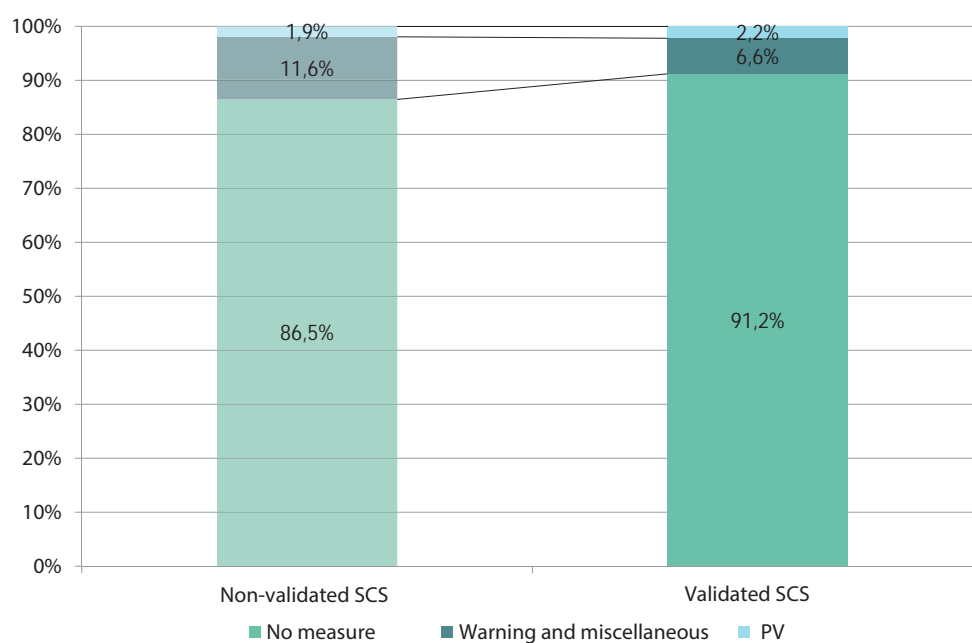
	AANTAL MAATREGELEN
Warnings	1,325
Seizures	75
Measures following non-compliances at another FFBO's premises.	74
PVs (procès-verbal)	96
Miscellaneous	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.620</b>

The inspection results are generally comparable to those of 2014, with the exception of the traceability inspections of markets and traders which were slightly less favourable. The most prevalent non-compliances concerned:

- the absence of a visitor's register or a register that is not up-to-date,
- absence of a pair of compliant earmarks for cattle or a compliant identification for small ruminants,
- meeting deadlines for recording data in the register,
- concerning horses : compliance with the rules for database registration.

The results of the inspections pertaining to infrastructure and vehicle hygiene have improved compared to 2014: this can be explained by the improved results of the inspection prior to the approval of the vehicles.

*The inspection results are considerably better for those establishments that have a validated self-checking system (SCS).*



### 3.2.1. Residues of pesticides

The use of pesticides in the production of vegetables, fruit and field crops may give rise to the presence of residues in food and feed. The maximum residue limits (MRLs) are laid down in the European legislation so that the correct use of pesticides (the use of approved products for the production of crops, the observance of doses and terms prior to harvest) can be verified in order to protect the consumers' health: [http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/max\\_residue\\_levels/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/max_residue_levels/index_en.htm). Food and feed in which the residues exceed the MRL may not be marketed.

The inspection programme for pesticide residues implemented by the BFSa was drawn up based on risk and pays special attention to food and feed that might exceed the MRL.

#### Results of the analyses of pesticide residues

	INSPECTION MOTIVE	NUMBER OF SAMPLINGS	FAVOURABLE SAMPLINGS	2015 vs 2014
Baby food	Inspection plan	88	98.9%	+1.0%
Feed	Inspection plan*	108	99.1%	+3.7%
	Follow-up of non-compliances***	1	100%	=
Water	Inspection plan	195	97.9%	not carried out in 2014
Vegetables, fruit, cereals	Inspection plan	1,993	97.3%	-0.2%
	Regulation 669/2009****	427	94.6%	+0.4%
	Follow-up of non-compliances	87	75.9%	+15.3%
Products of animal origin	Inspection plan	745	99.9%	-0.1%
	Follow-up of non-compliances	3	100%	=
Processed products of plant origin	Inspection plan	147	98.0%	-2.0%
	Follow-up of non-compliances	5	100%	=
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,799</b>	<b>97.2%</b>	<b>+1.6%</b>

\* samples that are analysed in the framework of the inspection programme in which samples are taken at random

\*\* targeted samples that are analysed following non-compliances that were found in the inspection plan, complaints, ...

\*\*\* targeted samples that are analysed in the framework of the reinforced checks at import

#### *Measures following non-compliances*

	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Seizures	4
Measures following non-compliances at another FFBO's premises.	64
PV (Procès-verbal)	12
Warnings	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>

#### *Compliances according to the origin of the foodstuffs in the framework of the inspection*

ORIGIN OF THE PRODUCTS	FAVOURABLE SAMPLINGS
Belgium	99.1%
EU Member States	98.8%
Third countries (non-EU countries)	95.4%

### 3.2.2. Phytosanitary checks

In 2015, the BFSa conducted 8,142 analyses on plants, plant products, soil and other materials that may be carriers of harmful organisms; 92.5% of the samples were compliant. The non-compliant results are mainly due to fire blight (*Erwinia amylovora*) and to the large number of Thrips (small slender insects with fringed wings which were caught during the monitoring.

These samplings were carried out at the premises of producers, in shipping centres, in public green spaces and in forests. This surveillance makes it possible to provide the international guarantees that our plants and plant products comply with legal requirements. The BFSa delegates a considerable amount of samplings to the Regions, in particular in the seed potato cultivation sector.

### 3.2.3. Feed

*The results of the 1,451 missions carried out in 1,403 feed producing establishments*

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	1,187	88.6%
Packaging and labelling (trade standards included)	1,345	84.8%
Compulsory notification	1,222	98.6%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	1,116	93.7%
Self-checking system	1,222	88.9%
Foodstuff by-products	241	97.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,333</b>	<b>91.1%</b>

#### *Measures*

	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Warnings	341
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises.	14
PVs (procès-verbal)	40
Seizures	21
Temporary closures	0
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	0
Miscellaneous	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>458</b>

The inspection results are on par with those of 2014, with the exception of the results regarding labelling (-2,3%) and infrastructure, equipment and hygiene (-2%).

The BFSa also checks the use of medicines on farms (register of medicinal products, stocks...): 99.3% of the 276 missions regarding medicated feed were favourable.

Out of 6,492 missions conducted on farms the requirements concerning the hygiene of primary raw materials intended for feed and on-farm use were checked among other things. These results were compliant in 98.2% of the cases.

### 3.2.4. Animal Health

Belgium is officially free of several cattle and pig diseases: bovine leucosis, bovine brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis, Aujeszky's disease, foot-and-mouth disease, rabies, highly pathogenic avian influenza, Newcastle's disease in poultry, classical swine fever, blue tongue, etc. The complete list can be consulted on the BFSa website.

In the context of the intra-community trade and the export to third countries, it is important for Belgium to stay free of these diseases.

The BFSa's sanitary policy allows us to maintain disease-free status and extend the scope. Among other things, it provides for research and systematic analyses in case of abortions in cattle and small ruminants, an adapted winter campaign, blood analyses of cattle originating from countries that

are not officially free of certain diseases upon entry in Belgium and the analysis and monitoring of developments of newly emerging or re-emerging diseases. The BFSa entrusts an important part of health surveillance to the Regional associations for animal health ARSIA and DGZ (monitoring and diagnosis of notifiable diseases, targeted surveillance of diseases in the framework of official surveillance and eradication programmes, support and business guidance in the framework of disease monitoring, identification and registration of animals) as well as to CODA-CERVA (the national reference laboratory for animal diseases, zoonoses, epidemiological research and risk analysis, improvement of the databases used for vaccination campaigns and animal health inspections) and allocates €10 million a year for health surveillance.

#### **Bovine tuberculosis**

Belgium has been officially free of bovine tuberculosis since 25 June 2003. This means that bovine tuberculosis is still found annually in less than 0.1% of all cattle farms.

In 2015, 3 outbreaks of bovine tuberculosis were found. After detecting a first outbreak in the province of Limburg on 30 July 2015, 162 contact farms were subjected to a follow-up treatment in the form of general herd tuberculin testing. On 9 September 2015, bovine tuberculosis was found in a contact farm of the first outbreak site. On 5 November 2015, the presence of tuberculosis was once again confirmed in a second contact farm of the first outbreak site. In the framework of the epidemiological investigation and the tracing of this second and third outbreak site, respectively 10 and 39 additional contact farms were subjected to a follow-up treatment by means of tuberculin testing. All contact farms that had to be blocked, have in the meantime been released.

#### **Monitoring abortions**

For each notification of an abortion in cattle, sheep or goats, extensive tests are conducted in order to verify the presence of a large number of pathogenic agents. These tests are carried out in addition to the mandatory brucellosis test. The cause of the abortion is investigated by conducting serological tests on the mother animal and virological and bacteriological tests on the aborted foetus or the placenta).

In 2015, 11,884 abortions in cattle were investigated. This is an increase compared to 2013 (9,506) and 2014 (10,577). Not a single case of brucellosis was found. The pathogenic agents identified were: Neospora, Trueperella pyogenes, BVD, Listeria monocytogenes, the pathogens causing Q fever, yeasts and fungi, Salmonella.





### 3.3. Antibiotics resistance

The Belgian authorities and research institutions in general and the BFSa and its scientific committee in particular, pay a great deal of attention to antimicrobial resistance. Not only is the situation being monitored (analyses of meat and live animals), but concrete measures are also being prepared and executed in order to achieve a rational use of antibiotics in the animal sector. This is done to reduce antibiotics resistance and thereby prevent this issue from becoming a threat to public health.

Together with the different FBOs from the sector, the Agency makes a financial contribution and collaborates with the AMCRA (Antimicrobial Consumption and Resistance in Animals). This expertise centre raises awareness among cattle farmers and veterinarians, provides a state of affairs concerning the use of antibiotics and creates guides to promote a responsible use of antibiotics.

In 2015, the first steps were taken towards an agreement between the government and the sectors involved to ensure the follow-up of the objectives proposed by the AMCRA to reduce the use of antibiotics and to stimulate the implementation of self-regulation measures. A Royal Decree was also drawn up, which will establish the rules for the compulsory central registration of the use of antimicrobial products and which will provide a framework for the use in veterinary medicine of antibiotics that are crucial to animal and public health. The signing of the agreement and the publication of the Royal Decree are planned for the summer of 2016.

Since 2011, the BFSa has been monitoring the antimicrobial resistance of pathogens and indicator germs in calves, pigs and poultry. Since 2014, a monitoring harmonized at the European level has been in place, which is also carried out by Belgium. Antimicrobial resistance of, among other bacteria, E. Coli, Salmonella and Campylobacter, as well as the presence of ESBL-producing E. Coli is being monitored. The European results are published annually by the EFSA.

Thanks to these efforts a significant reduction could be seen in the resistance of, and the prevalence of the multi-resistance of E. coli in different animals in the period 2011-2015. This is, for instance, reflected in a decrease of the prevalence of ESBL-producing E. coli bacteria on carcasses and poultry meat.



### 3.4. Slaughter

All cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and horses must undergo ante mortem and post mortem examinations. These examinations are called inspections. The primary objective of these inspections is to guarantee the protection of public health by isolating and excluding meat with anatomical abnormalities,

which is contaminated by pathogenic agents, or which contains residues of veterinary medicines, pesticides or contaminants thereby blocking it from human consumption. The inspections are carried out by an official veterinarian, usually a BFSA veterinarian on assignment.

	INSPECTED CARCASSES	SEIZED CARCASSES
Cattle	519,402	2,041 (0.4%)
Calves	355,545	283 (0.1%)
Pigs	11,918,915	32,205 (0.3%)
Horses	8,540	77 (0.9%)
Sheep	128,262	147 (0.1%)
Goats	11,711	55 (0.5%)
Poultry	307,538,818	3,585,134 (1.2%)
Rabbits	3,010,412	53,784 (1.8)

In addition to the inspection itself, the official veterinarian also conducts checks pertaining to food chain information (FCI), animal welfare, specified risk materials (measures taken with regard to BSE or mad

cow disease) and other by-products, laboratory tests, hygiene, infrastructure and self-checking systems.

*Results of the 3,339 missions carried out in 102 slaughterhouses*

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Animal welfare	4.051	not applicable
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	610	88.0%
Animal by-products that are not intended for human consumption: waste management	297	96.3%
Self-checking system	184	88.0%
Packaging and labelling (trade standards included)	297	100%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	305	98.7%
Compulsory notification	299	100%
Means of transport	266	96.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,258</b>	<b>94.7%</b>





These results are comparable to those of 2014, except for the inspections of the infrastructure, equipment and hygiene in poultry and rabbit slaughterhouses, which were less favourable (-4.2%).

#### Measures

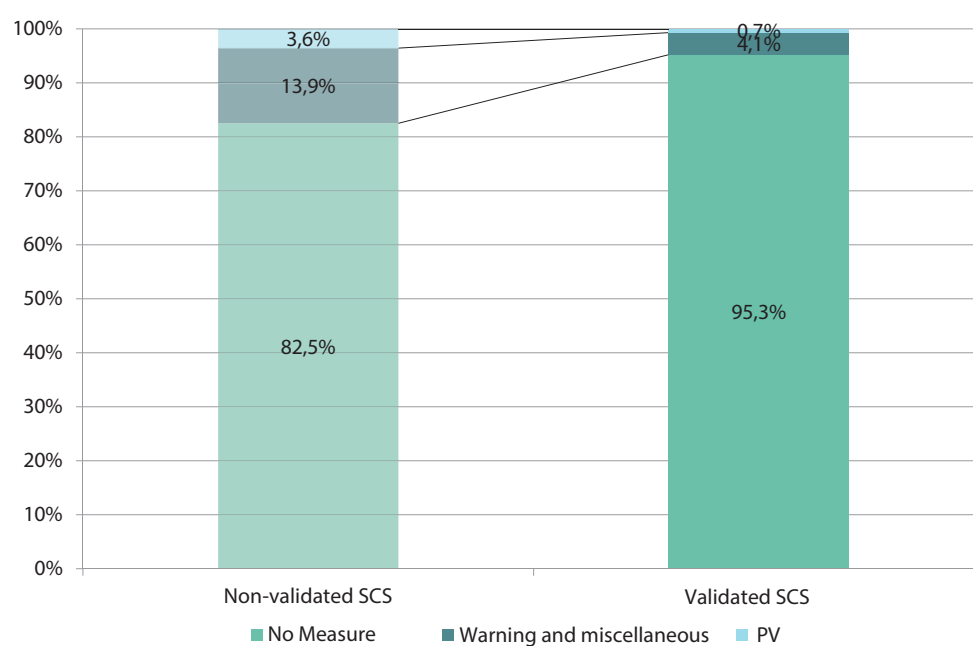
	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Warnings	71
Seizures	1
PVs (procès-verbal)	16
Miscellaneous measures	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>

### 3.5. Food processing

Results of the 4,549 missions carried out in 3,978 food processing establishments

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	7,675	91.4%
Packaging and labelling (trade standards included)	3,533	94.7%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	2,817	92.8%
Self-checking system	2,424	88.0%
Compulsory notification	2,817	99.0%
Animal by-products that are not intended for human consumption: waste management	1,542	98.4%
Means of transport	1,568	98.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,617</b>	<b>93.7%</b>

The results of the inspections in food processing establishments are considerably better for those establishments that have a validated self-checking system (SCS).



*Measures*

	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Warnings	643
Seizures	42
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises.	9
PVs (procès-verbal)	155
Temporary closures	5
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	13
Miscellaneous measures	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>917</b>

The results are generally satisfying and comparable to those of 2014.





## Cutting plants

*Results of the 582 missions carried out in 504 cutting plants*

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Infrastructure and equipment	704	91.2%
Self-checking system	546	89.0%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	551	94.9%
Means of transport	521	97.9%
Compulsory notification	501	99.0%
Animal by-products that are not intended for human consumption: waste management	501	98.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,324</b>	<b>94.8%</b>

## Producers of dairy farm products

*Resultaten van de 250 missies uitgevoerd bij 249 producenten van hoevezuivel (kaas, yoghurt, roomijs, boter, ...).*

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	243	95.1%
Packaging and labelling (trade standards included)	192	93.2%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	163	93.3%
Self-checking system	90	97.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>94.5%</b>

*Measures*

	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Seizures	4
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises.	1
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	2
PVs (procès-verbal)	27
Warnings	81
Miscellaneous measures	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>

The results are comparable to those of 2014.

*Measures*

	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Warnings	41
PVs (procès-verbal)	4
Miscellaneous measures	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

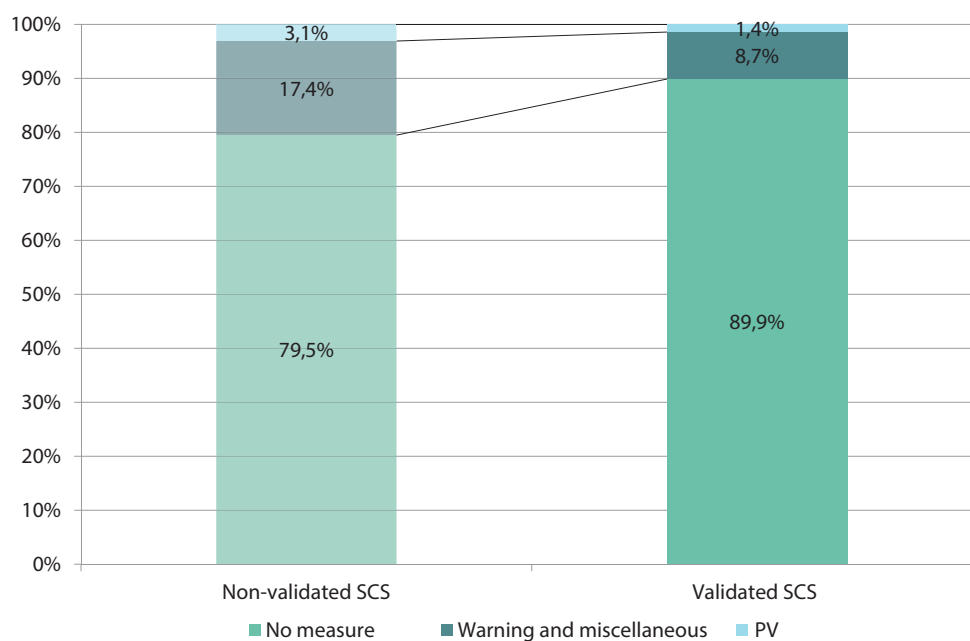
These inspection results are comparable to those of 2014.

### 3.6. Wholesale traders

*The results of the 771 missions carried out in 767 wholesale*

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	772	90.9%
Compulsory notification	634	96.1%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	561	93.2%
Self-checking system	574	93.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,541</b>	<b>93.3%</b>

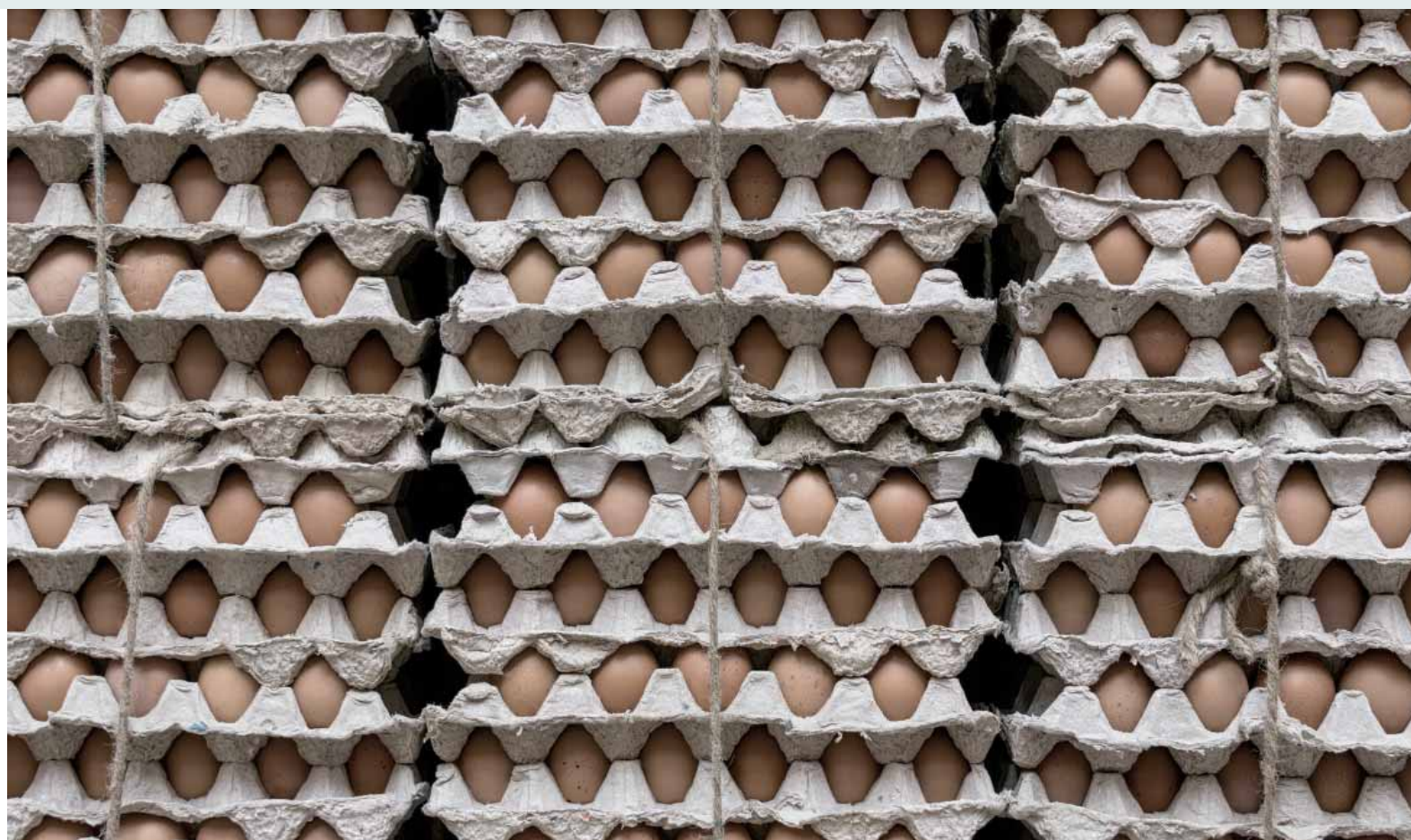
The inspection results of wholesalers are remarkably better for those businesses that have a validated self-checking system (SCS).



*Measures*

	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Warnings	146
Final seizure	17
PVs (procès-verbal)	41
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	2
Miscellaneous measures	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>

The results of the inspections on hygiene, infrastructure and equipment are better than in 2014 (+4.6%).



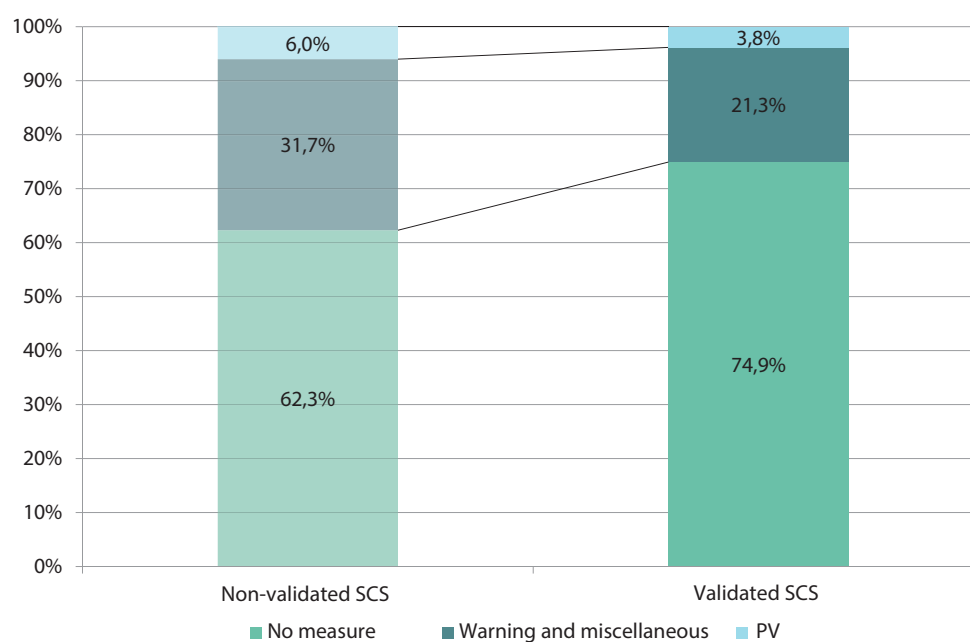
### 3.7. Retail

Results of the 11,576 missions carried out in 11,268 retail businesses

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	12,189	71.1%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	7,641	89.2%
Compulsory notification	6,838	97.1%
Self-checking system	6,826	80.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,494</b>	<b>82,3%</b>

The inspection results for infrastructure, equipment and hygiene are better than in 2014 (+3,7%).

The results of the inspections in retail businesses are considerably better for those establishments that have a validated self-checking system (SCS).



*Measures*

	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Warnings	3,746
Final seizure	198
Measure other operator	29
PVs (procès-verbal)	825
Temporary closures	15
Miscellaneous measures	259
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,072</b>

The most prevalent serious non-compliances in retail businesses (without processing activities) involved:

- preserving the correct temperatures of cooled food and the cold chain (10.5%),
- the absence of spoiled food or food which is past its use-by date or which is not fit for human consumption (6.1%)
- preserving the correct temperatures of deep-frozen products (3.9%).

The most prevalent serious non-compliances in the retail sector (with processing activities) concerned:

- preserving the correct temperatures of cooled food and the cold chain (12.3%),
- the absence of spoiled food or food which is past its use-by date or which is not fit for human consumption (7.0%)
- good personal hygiene and wearing appropriate and clean clothes (6.1%)

The most prevalent serious non-compliances found in retail businesses selling bakery products and pastry were:

- preserving the correct temperatures of cooled food and the cold chain (12.6%),
- cleanliness of surfaces that come into contact with food (11.3%)
- good personal hygiene and wearing appropriate and clean clothes (7.9%).

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The most prevalent serious non-compliances found in meat outlets concerned:

- the analysis of the annual mandatory sample of minced meat or a meat preparation based on minced meat (14.4%)
- the cleanliness of the surfaces that come into contact with foodstuffs (11.3%)
- the absence of spoilt food or food which is past its use-by date or which is not fit for human consumption (6.4%)

The most prevalent serious non-compliances in fish shops pertained to:

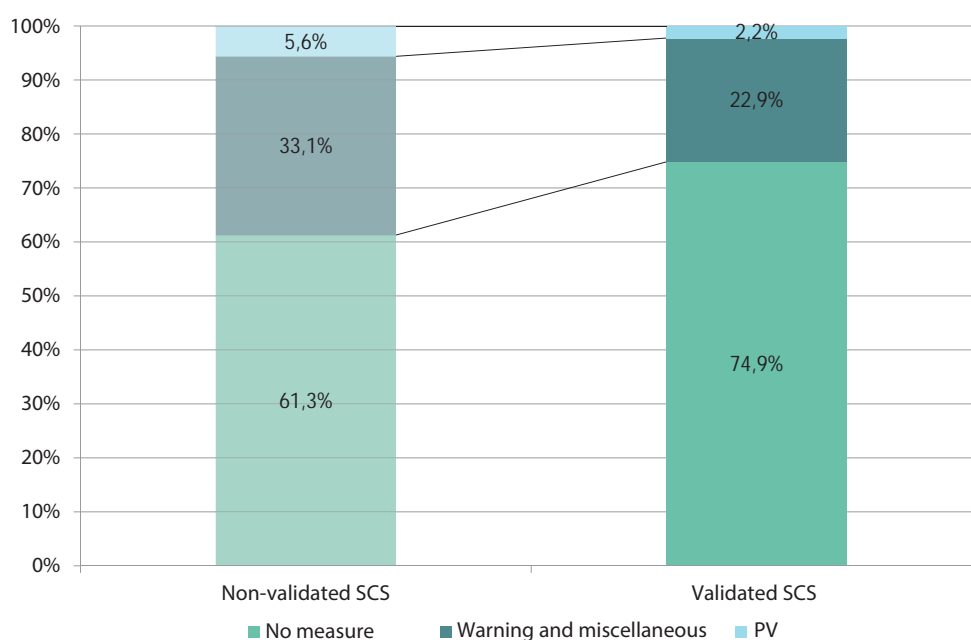
- preserving the correct temperatures of cooled food and the cold chain (5.5%)
- the absence of spoilt food or food which is past its use-by date or which is not fit for human consumption (4.3%)
- good personal hygiene and wearing appropriate and clean clothes (3.7%)





### 3.8. Hotel and catering industry and institutional kitchens

The inspection results in hotel and catering businesses and institutional kitchens are remarkably better in businesses which have a validated self-checking system (SCS).



#### Hotel and catering industry

The results of the 15,861 missions in 15,468 hotel and catering businesses

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Smoking ban	13,436	95.2%
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene in restaurants	13,038	59.3%
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene in pubs	1,031	85.8%
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene in itinerant businesses	1,100	72.6%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	10,016	86.3%
Compulsory notification	9,708	96.8%
Self-checking system	9,924	67.8%
Hotel and catering sector light	517	99.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,770</b>	<b>80.8%</b>

### Hotel and catering businesses light

Since 2013, the BFSA uses a light version of the checklist for the hotel and catering sector when the operators concerned have an authorization (non itinerant business). This checklist was developed with a view to administrative simplification and encourages operators to comply with regulations. This checklist consists of a limited number of items to be checked and can be applied if:

- previous missions have been favourable (no warning, no official reports, no temporary closure,...);
- no processing of food was carried out,
- the manager is still the same,
- the same activities are carried out,
- no major non-compliant item was found during the inspection.

The inspection results on infrastructure, equipment and hygiene are better than in 2014 for restaurants (+3.6%) and mobile catering business operators (+5.9%). The results of the inspections on traceability are better than those of 2014 (+ 5.1 %). The results of the inspections pertaining to traceability are clearly less favourable than in 2014 (-2.1%).

Like in 2014, the most prevalent serious non-

compliances involved cleanliness of the surfaces that come into contact with food (10.0%), preserving the correct temperatures of cooled food and the cold chain (9.0%), the absence of spoilt food or food that is past its use-by date or that is not fit for human consumption (7.1%), good personal hygiene and wearing appropriate and clean clothing (6.8%) and defrosting under appropriate circumstances (5.4%).

### Measures

	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Warnings	5,802
Final seizure	155
Measures following non-compliances at another FFBO's premises.	27
PVs (procès-verbal)	1,394
Temporary closures	25
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	1
Miscellaneous measures	365
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,769</b>

## Institutional kitchens

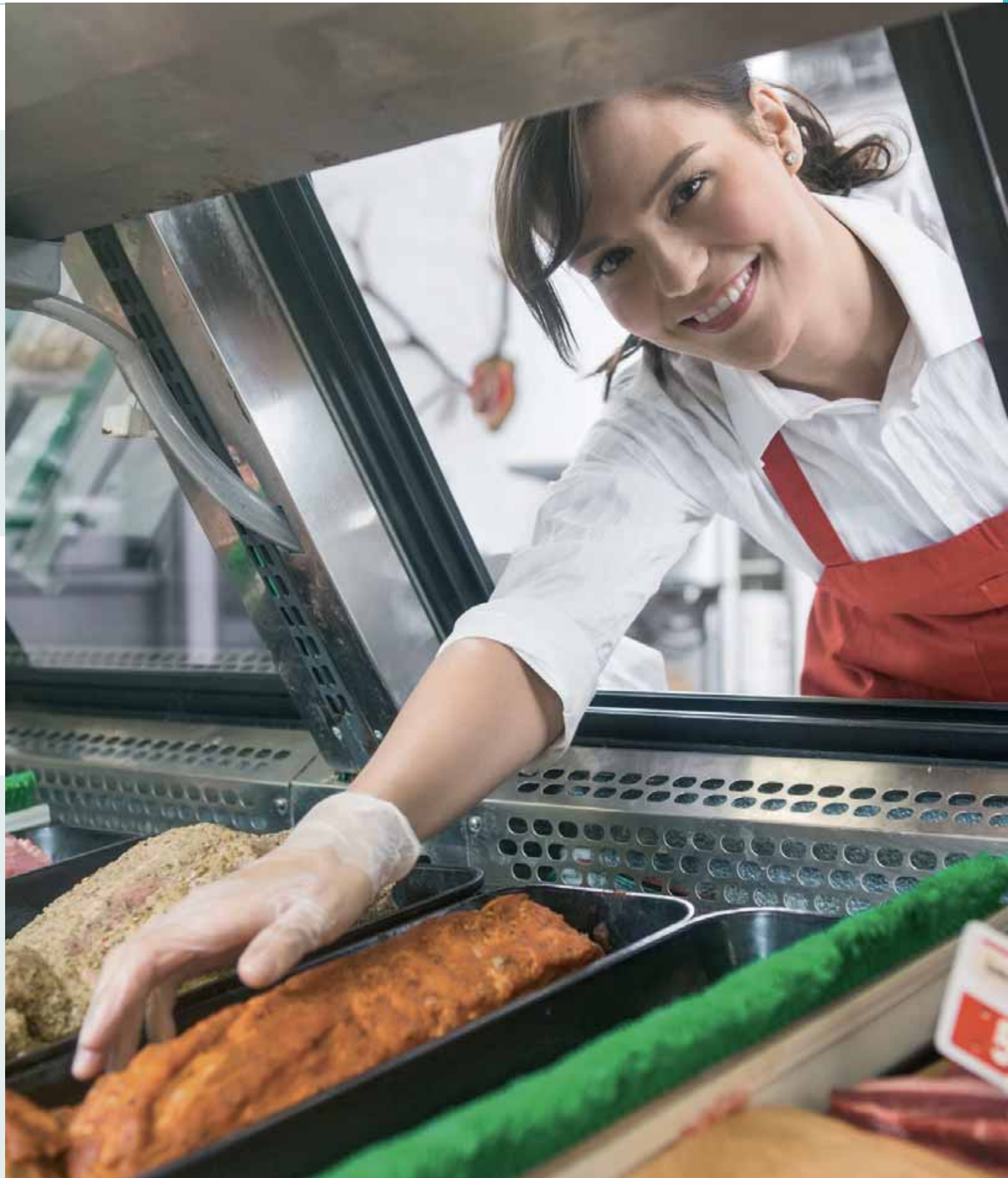
*Results of the 5,012 missions conducted in 5,001 institutional kitchens*

	NUMBER OF CHECKLISTS	FAVOURABLE CHECKLISTS
Self-checking systems in institutional kitchens, except in day care centres	2,870	85.7%
Self-checking system in day care centres	878	86.6%
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene in institutional kitchens, except in infant formula rooms	5,018	77.8%
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene in infant formula rooms	71	98.6%
Compulsory notification	3,789	98.9%
Traceability (identification and registration included)	3,921	93.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,547</b>	<b>88.2%</b>

The inspection results concerning infrastructure, equipment and hygiene (+ 6.2%), self-checking (+ 3.4%) are better than in 2014.

## Measures

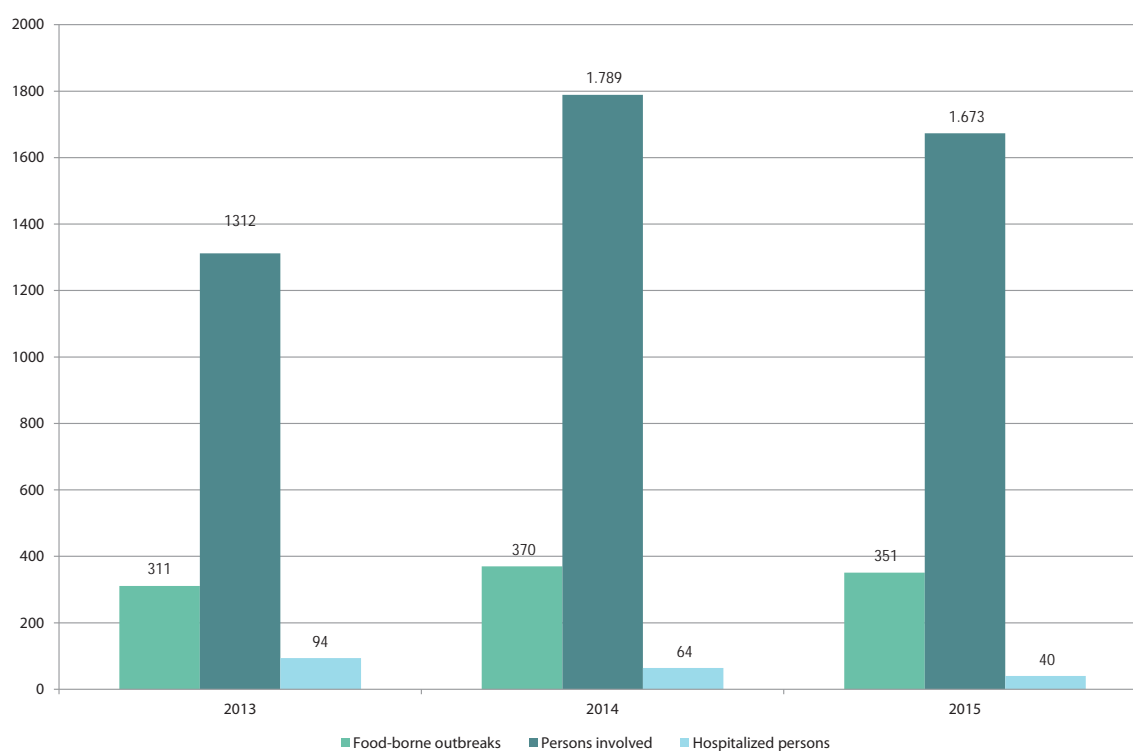
	NUMBER OF MEASURES
Warnings	1,453
Seizures	5
Measures following non-compliances at another FFBO's premises.	16
PVs (procès-verbal)	89
Miscellaneous measures	84
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,647</b>



### 3.9. Food-borne outbreaks

Food-borne outbreaks is an umbrella term for infections or intoxications caused by the consumption of microbiologically contaminated food or water. We speak of food-borne outbreaks when, under the same circumstances, 2 or more people display similar symptoms and when there is a (probable) causal relationship with the same food source.

*Number of notified food-borne outbreaks*





*The cause of the food-borne outbreaks was identified in only 3.7% of the cases by analysis of food remnants or by examination of the sick person.*

	NUMBER OF FOOD- BORNE OUTBREAKS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE AFFECTED	NUMBER OF PEOPLE HOSPITALIZED	SUSPECTED ORIGIN
Coagulase-positive staphylococcus	4	112	1	Fishery products, vegetable and fruit juices, drinks, mixed food
Bacillus cereus	5	83	0	Mixed food
Salmonella	4	68	1	Beef, turkey meat and derived products
Norovirus	2	29	0	Unknown
Campylobacter	2	10	1	Unknown
E. coli O157:H7/VTEC	2	8	8	Unknown
Shigella	2	4	0	Water (including tap water)
Yersinia enterocolitica	1	3	0	Unknown
Histamines	1	2	2	Fishery products
Unknown	328	1,354	27	Unknown
<b>Total</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>1,673</b>	<b>40</b>	

However, the suspicion that the number of food-borne outbreaks is underestimated continues to exist. This has to do, among other things, with issues of diagnosis and more precisely the difficulty in establishing a link between a food-borne outbreak and food. In addition, the ineffective and often late notification of food-borne outbreaks also plays a crucial role in this respect. Certainly in case only mild symptoms appear, food-borne outbreaks are usually not reported.



### 3.10. Checks at import

*Import controls: number of consignments (with % of refused consignments)*

	2013	2014	2015
Live animals	3,259 (1%)	3,147 (0.8%)	13,361* (0.2%)
Foodstuffs	25,023 (0.6%)	25,045 (0.5%)	24,681 (0.4%)
Plants and plant products	21,033 (0.4%)	17,744 (0.5%)	19,832 (1.0%)
Products not intended for human consumption	2,170 (3%)	2,174 (0.8%)	2,353 (0.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>51,485 (0.7%)</b>	<b>48,110 (0.5%)</b>	<b>60,227 (0.6%)</b>

\* 10,799 consignments contained fish and aquaculture animals

#### Increased level of official controls on imports

Within the EU, there is a harmonized approach of the checks on food and feed imported from third countries. Based on known risks or new risks, European legislation provides for more extensive checks of feed and food of non-animal origin, including analyses, at the points of entry into the EU (airports, seaports,...). The purpose is to more effectively control new or known risks and collect analysis results.

In 2015, 633 analyses were carried out on 5,072 consignments of imported vegetables, fruit (including garden herbs), spices, etc.; 27 consignments were refused due to non-compliant results: the presence of residues of pesticides (20) and mycotoxins (7).

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### **Import controls in the framework of protective measures**

When it appears that a certain foodstuff imported from a certain third country possibly poses a serious risk to the health of humans, animals or plants and when it is impossible to sufficiently manage the risk, the European Commission may establish special conditions by way of protective measures.

These protective measures are aimed at the control of:

- aflatoxins in achenes, dried figs and pastes of these products from certain third countries,
- pentachlorophenol (PCP) in guar gum and derived products from India
- GMOs in rice and rice products from China,
- radioactivity of foodstuffs from Japan due to the nuclear incident in Fukushima
- pesticide residues in okra from India.

These products are presented to the BFSA for inspection and are subsequently always subjected to a document inspection (certificate, analysis report, ...) and samples are possibly taken for further analysis. In 2015, 2,336 consignments for import were registered in Belgium, 188 of which were sampled: 31 of these consignments were refused, 22 due to the presence of aflatoxins and 9 due to non-compliant documents.





### 3.11. Fraud control

In the context of fraud control regarding food chain safety, the BFSA's National Investigations UNIT (NIU) conducts investigations on the illegal use of growth promoters, participates in roadside checks at the request of the police, organizes actions on certain topics (checks at horse races, at horse merchants' stables, identification of horses, pesticides, veterinary medicinal products, internet sales of food supplements,...).

This Unit actively cooperates with various Belgian authorities and international bodies and participates in the working groups of:

- the Multidisciplinary Hormone Unit (MHC-CMH),
- the Interdepartmental Commission for the Coordination of Fraud Control in economic sectors (ICCF),
- the Interdepartmental Coordination Unit for Food Safety Inspection (ICVV),
- the Multidisciplinary Fraud Control Unit for the Safety of the Food Chain (MFVV), which is chaired by the BFSA,
- the Food Fraud Working Group organized by DG Sanco of the European Commission,
- the working Group of Enforcement Officers (WGEO).

#### *Fraud Control*

	2013	2014	2015
Fraud Investigations	176	404	522
Participation in roadside checks	37	47	18
Specific actions	34	34	23
The transfer of information to other services	104	76	113
Infringements	225	225	168



### Checks of passengers' luggage at customs

In cooperation with customs, the Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products (FAMHP) and the FPS Public Health and the BFSA conducted checks on passengers' luggage at Brussels National Airport (Zaventem), and the airports of Brussels South (Gosselies), Bierseet and Ostend. The abidance of the rules concerning the import of meat, plants, animal and plant products, animals - protected species

included- was checked during these controls, since compliance with these rules is of utmost importance to public health and the protection of endangered species (CITES). Checks also targeted the illegal import of cosmetics and medicines. This action is referred to as the "BACON" action (Baggage CONTROLS).

*During the 38 checks carried out in 2015, the BFSA, the FAMHP and the FPS Public Health seized large quantities of products from 468 travellers:*

	2013	2014	2015
Foodstuffs (meat, fish, dairy products, fruit,...),	1,199 kg	724 kg	1,915 kg
Cosmetic products	1,481	1,241	1,670
Boxes of medicines	974	1,322	1,211

In the framework of the awareness creation campaign aimed at the prevention of rabies, checks on pets were carried out: 67 dogs and cats were checked; one cat was placed in quarantine because the waiting time after a vaccination was not taken into account.

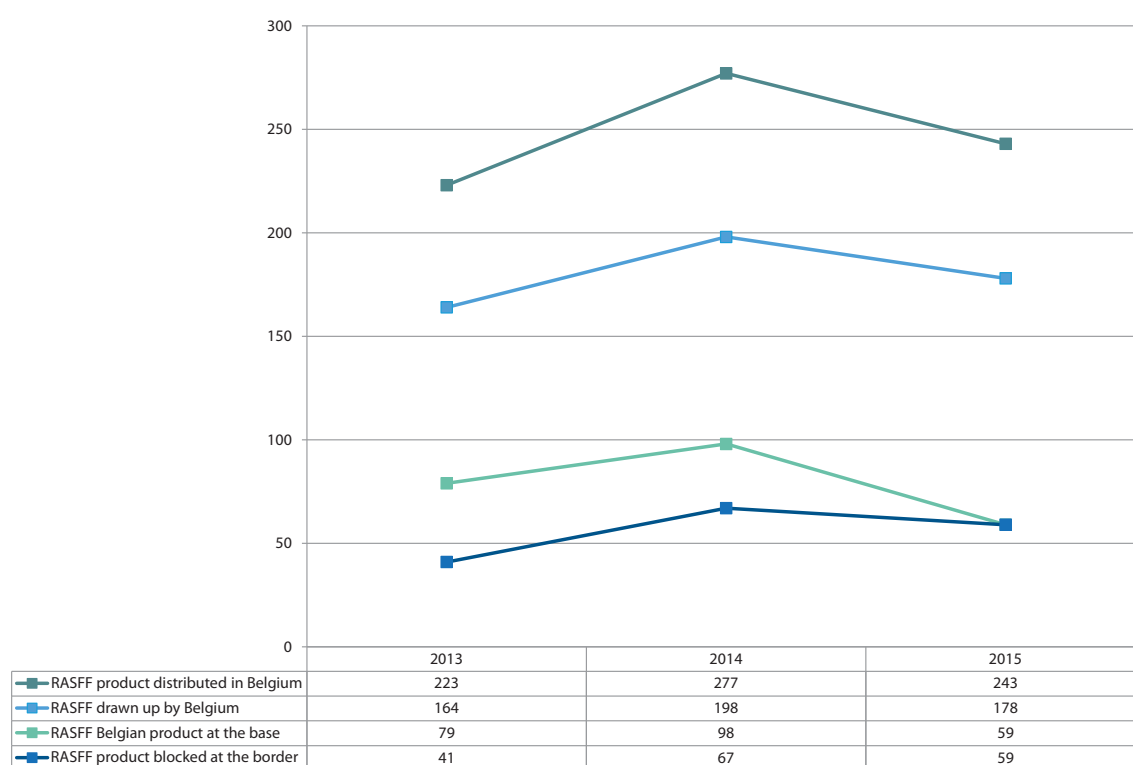
Due to the amendment of the EU legislation governing the non-commercial movement of pets in late December 2014, the checks were modified and the Agency organized trainings for BFSA and Customs employees.

## 3.12. Notifications and consequences of checks

### 3.12.1. RASFF

In 2015, all EU member states combined made 2,961 notifications via the Rapid Alert System for Food & Feed (RASFF) (3,516 in 2012,

3,133 in 2013, 3,090 in 2014) concerning products that might pose a threat to the health of humans or animals.



*The top 5 of Belgian RASFF-notifications in 2015 based on the hazard*

	RASFF
Aflatoxins	23.6%
Salmonella	16.9%
Mercury	3.4%
STEC	3.4%
Enterobacteriaceae	3.4%

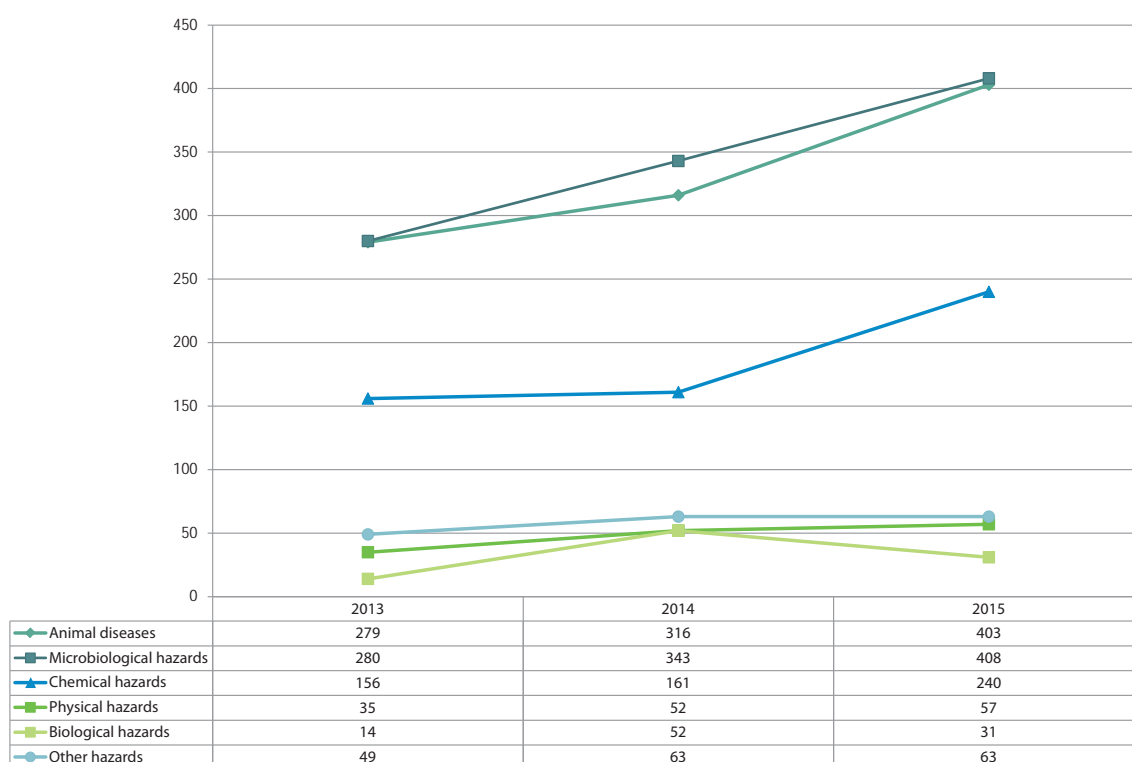
Top 5 of Belgian RASFF notifications in 2015 per product category

	RASFF
Nuts and derived products	20.2%
Feed	15.7%
Fruit and vegetables	12.9%
Herbs	9.6%
Poultry meat (products)	9.6%

### 3.12.2. Compulsory notification

Each food business operator carrying out activities that fall within the scope of the BFSA's responsibilities is required to inform the Agency whenever he/she suspects that a product imported, produced, raised,

grown, processed, manufactured or distributed may be harmful to the health of humans, animals or plants.



The number of notifications increased by 19% compared to 2014.

### 3.12.3. Actions taken upon the identification of non-compliances

	2013	2014	2015
Warnings	13,512	15,557	16,129
PVs (procès-verbal)	5,122	6,092	6,391
Seizures	1,443	1,761	1,521
Temporary closures	115	79	106
Amount of administrative fines	€2,874,255	€3,004,140	€3,384,975

#### Seizures

SEIZED PRODUCTS	QUANTITIES 2014	QUANTITIES 2015
Cereals and bakery products	289 tonnes	12,489 tonnes
Fertilizers, soil improvers, nutrient substrates	9 tonnes	138 tonnes
Meat and meat products	116 tonnes	60 tonnes
Plants and propagating material	15 tonnes	30 tonnes
Feed	520 tonnes	28 tonnes
Processed animal products	2 tonnes	19 tonnes
Fruit and vegetables	560 tonnes	18 tonnes
Fishery products	12 tonnes	16 tonnes
Pesticides	4.6 tonnes	12 tonnes
Various foodstuffs	1,522 tonnes	1,356 tonnes









# Food chain safety barometers

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In order to obtain a general overview of food chain safety, the BFSA's Scientific Committee, in collaboration with the Agency, has developed a food chain safety barometer, which includes food safety, animal health and plant health (phytosanitary status). This measurement tool allows for an objective annual monitoring of food chain safety and clear communication on this topic.

The barometers always make a comparison with the previous year and rely on indicators that are calculated based on carefully chosen measurable parameters. Most of these indicators are based on the results of the BFSA's control programme.

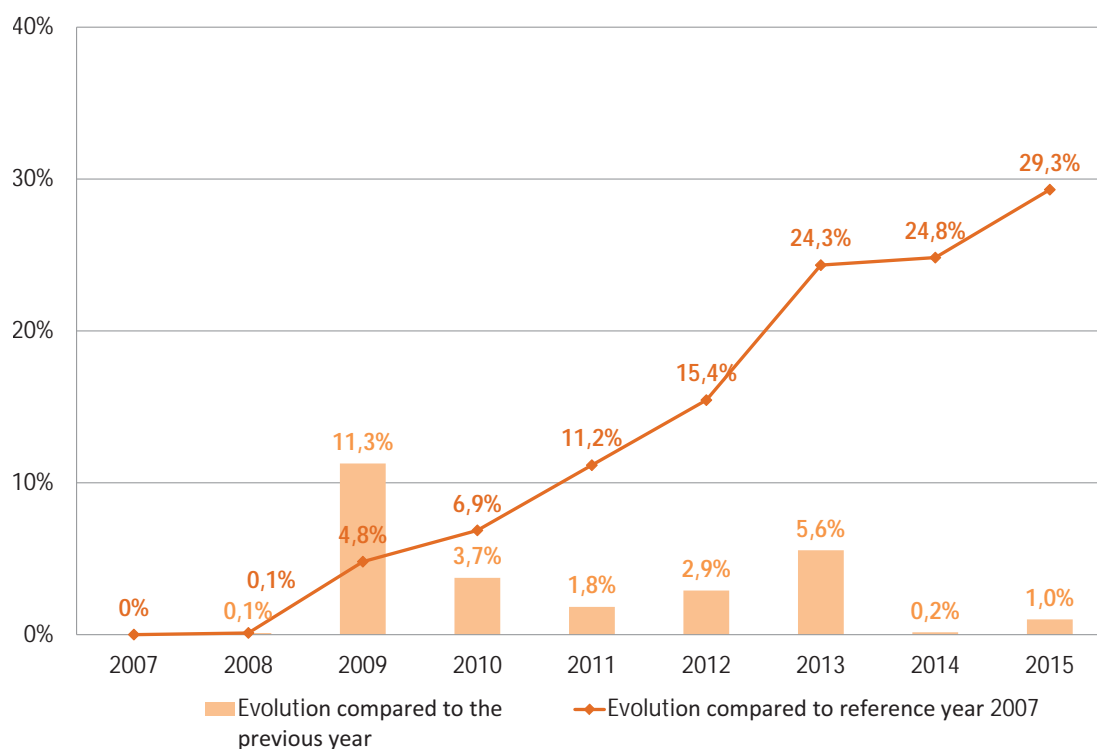
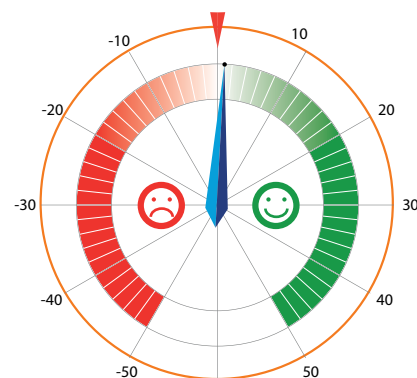
Since these indicators have different effects on the safety of the food chain, their relative importance has been weighted. They must be interpreted with the necessary caution, since annual fluctuations can have several causes. The food chain safety barometer is particularly suited for detecting general trends in food chain safety. Generally, the underlying results show that food safety in our country is at a high level.

2014 | 2015

+1,0%

#### 4.1. Food chain safety barometer

The food chain safety barometer showed a general improvement of 1% compared to 2014, which is the result of both positive and negative changes in a number of indicators.



For the fifth year in a row, an increase can be observed in the number of food safety notifications and the number of favourable inspections of self-checking systems. This points to an improved proactive approach to food chain safety. In addition, an increase can be observed in the number of operators with a validated self-checking system in the processing sector and the sector of institutional kitchens, as well as in the number of favourable

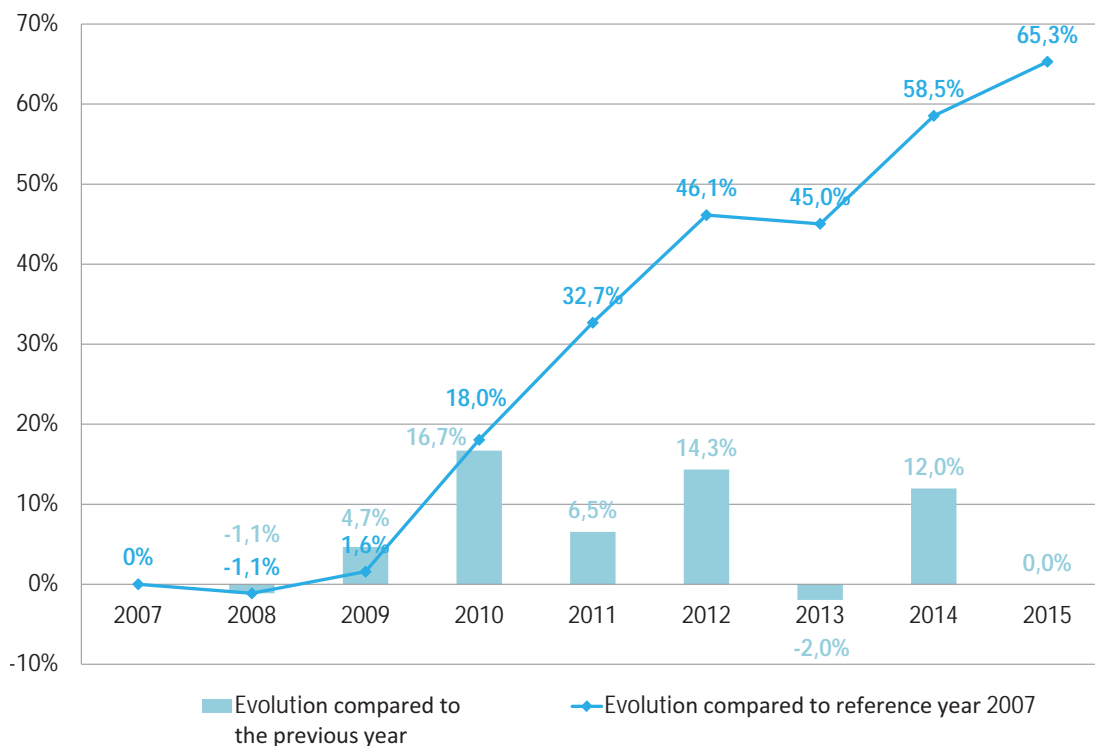
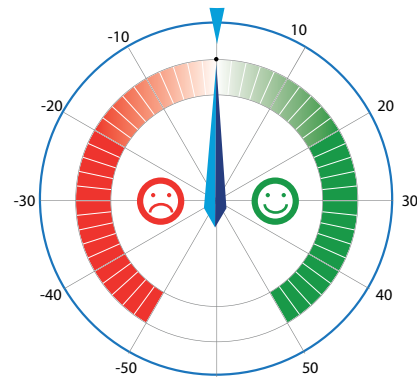
inspections of infrastructure, equipment and hygiene in the distribution sector, in the hotel and catering sector and in the sector of institutional kitchens. However, the indicator on food-borne outbreaks points to a less favourable evolution; please bear in mind that this evolution is calculated using the mean values of the previous 3 years to avoid excessive fluctuations.

2014 | 2015

0,0%

#### 4.2. Animal health barometer

From 2009 to 2015, the animal health barometer showed a positive trend and this despite a few outbreaks of (re)emerging animal diseases (bovine brucellosis, Schmallenberg virus, bovine tuberculosis, equine infectious anaemia and diseases in bees (American and European foulbrood). The influence of these outbreaks on the animal health barometer has remained relatively limited.



Compared to 2014, no general changes could be observed in the animal health barometer in 2015 (0%). This, however, does not exclude changes in the individual indicators. The indicator of antibiotics sensitivity of *E. coli* bacteria in poultry, pigs, young bovine animals and meat calves, for example, showed a very favourable evolution. The indicator for bovine abortion notifications showed an increase, which can be interpreted as an improved surveillance of animal diseases.

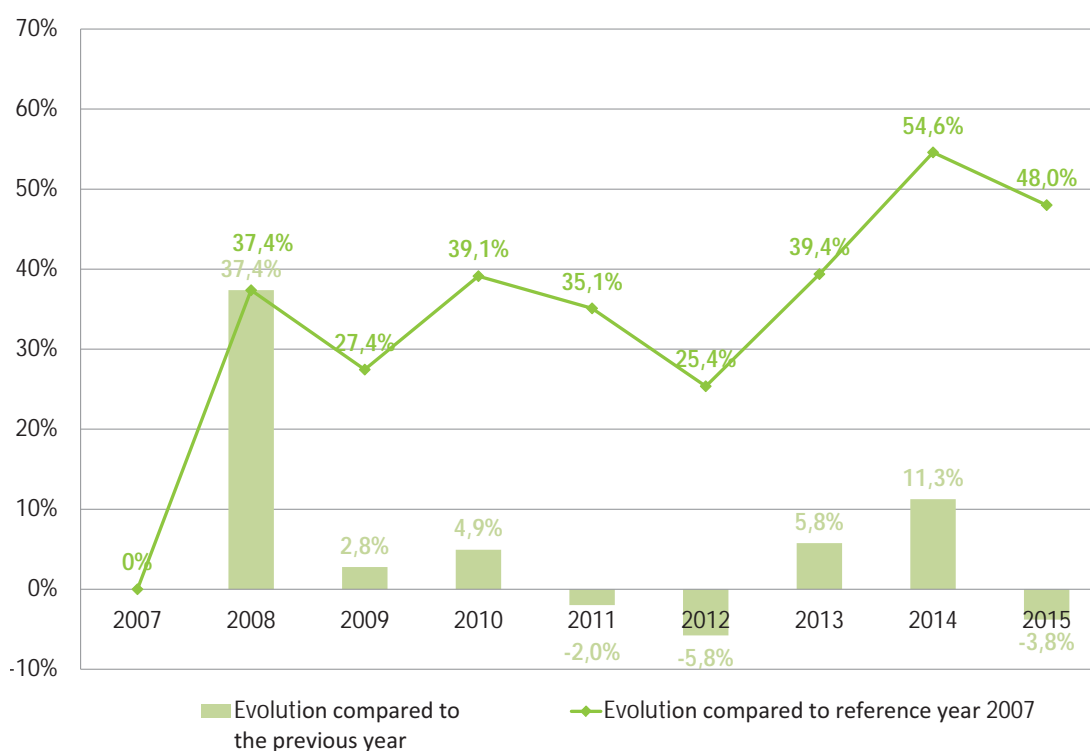
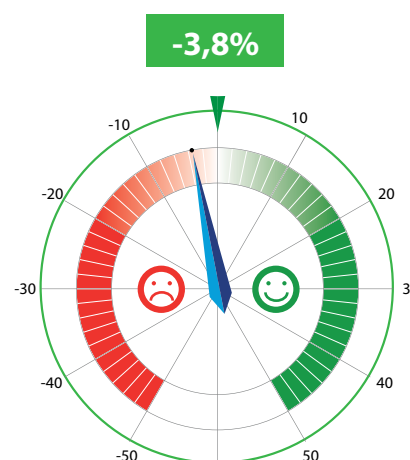
The number of notifications of notifiable animal diseases, on the other hand, showed a negative evolution, which points to a reduced surveillance of notifiable animal diseases.

Finally, it is worth noting that the animal welfare indicator could no longer be calculated, since animal welfare monitoring has become a Regional responsibility.

### 4.3. Plant health barometer

Compared to 2007, the plant health barometer generally shows a positive evolution. This trend can mainly be explained by the favourable evolution of the indicators regarding self-checking and notifications (which indicates a heightened vigilance on the part of the FFBOs).

2014 | 2015



Between 2014 and 2015, the plant health barometer indicated a decrease in plant health of 3.8%. The main cause is an unfavourable development of the indicator regarding notifications (which can be interpreted as decreased FFBO vigilance). At the same time, a positive trend could be observed in the indicator concerning phytosanitary checks at import.

It also has to be noted that the indicator pertaining to checks on the western corn rootworm (*Diabrotica virgifera* Le Conte) is no longer included in the barometer calculations. Since 2014, this harmful organism is no longer considered a quarantine organism in the EU. Consequently, the BFSA stopped monitoring this insect as of 2015.







# Facts and figures

Safe food day after day: our job!

2015

Belgian Food  
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