



2017

Facts and Figures

Safe Food day after day: our job!

Federal Agency
for the Safety
of the Food Chain



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Herman Diricks,
Chief Executive Officer

Foreword

Dear reader,

Whereas in our annual report of 2016 we could still talk about "business as usual", 2017 was anything but usual. This year will always be associated with the discovery of the illegal use of fipronil in laying hen farms.

In retrospect, we can conclude that we quickly and effectively brought the situation under control, which was also acknowledged by the European Commission.

Managing this incident took a lot of effort from the FASFC and its staff. As Chief Executive Officer, I would therefore like to thank each and everyone of them for their dedication and efforts to manage this complex situation. The lessons learned from this incident will help us to tackle future incidents even more effectively.

Needless to say, the professional sectors will also have to make an effort to improve the traceability of their products. More precisely, it is essential to keep track of the journey of foodstuffs, especially during an incident.

This important incident, however, did not deter our departments from carrying out their daily tasks.

No less than **116,285 inspection missions** were carried out in **62,393 businesses**. This means that, on average, a little bit more than 318 inspection missions were carried out each day! The results were favourable for 87.5% of the 213,411 inspection checklists. Compared to 2016, this basically amounts to a status quo.



On average, our inspectors took 201 samples per day in 2017, bringing the total number of samples to 73,394. As in 2016, the results are very reassuring: 96.4% of the samples were compliant.

In order to **optimize the operation** of our control units on the ground in light of the imposed savings, the decision was made to reduce the number of Local Control Units from 11 to 9. In the short run, this measure resulted in a lot of extra work for the central departments and proved to be very challenging from an IT perspective.

The consumer remains at the heart of the Agency's policy. In 2017, the Contact Point responded to 8,870 consumer questions, 15% of which pertained to fipronil in August. The number of questions increased by 26% compared to 2016, while the number of consumer complaints (3,804) increased by 4.2% compared to 2016.

The FASFC occasionally also reflects on **the reality on the terrain** and allocates an increasing amount of resources to small businesses to help them comply with regulations. For example, the guidance unit for small businesses has been operational since November 2016. This unit supports existing initiatives (e.g. initiatives from the regions, professional federations, ...) by organizing specific training and consultative meetings, publishing brochures and by being present on the ground as an advisor,...

This way the guidance unit can complement existing training on other topics and help small-scale food business operators to more easily comply with food safety regulations. The guidance unit is also the point of contact for operators seeking information on food safety legislation.

2017 proved to be a tumultuous year for the Agency and its staff. However, consumers, citizens, and food businesses can be sure of one thing: the 1,260 staff members working at the Food Agency will continue to maximize their efforts every day, regardless of the circumstances and difficulties surrounding the control of a complex food chain. The core of their mission remains the same: **monitoring the food chain and thereby ensuring food safety for our children, parents and neighbours.**

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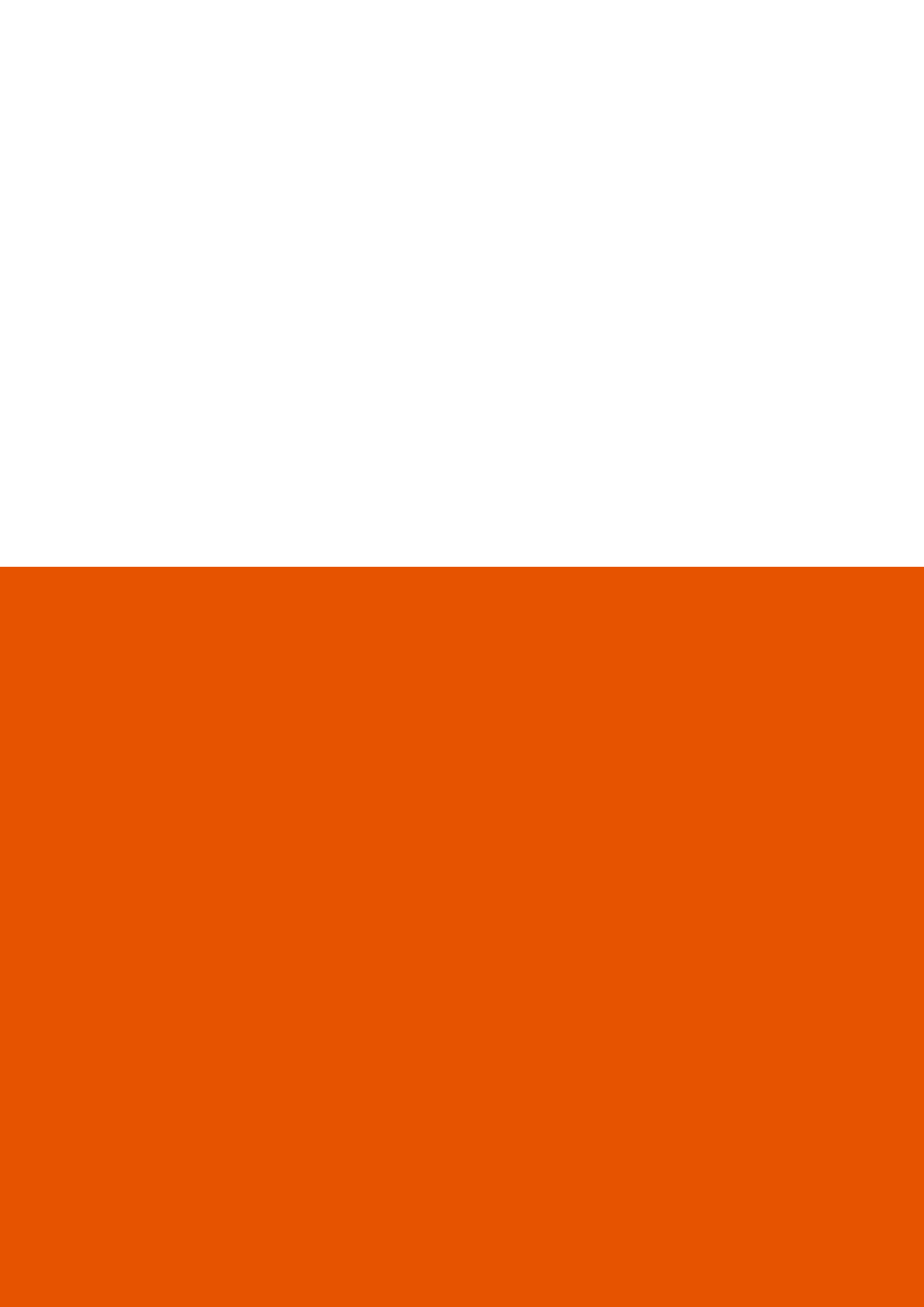
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The FASFC

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1



Agence fédérale
pour la Sécurité
de la Chaîne alimentaire

The Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC) was founded by the Act of 4 February 2000. The FASFC is a federal executive agency (type A parastatal body) which is responsible for the assessment and the management of risks that may be detrimental to the health of consumers and/or to the health of animals and plants. To this end, the Agency carries out food safety inspections throughout the entire food chain.

The FASFC integrates all control services, which are responsible for the entire food chain. It not only checks food, animal feed, fertilizers and plant protection products, but is also responsible for the prevention and control of animal diseases and plant health aspects (plant production sector).

The Agency is also responsible for establishing the rules for checks, certification and infrastructure standards food business operators have to comply with.

Moreover, the Agency manages all communications geared towards operators and also pays particular attention to consumer information.

Approximately 1,260 staff members spread across:

- the central administrations, which are ISO 9001 certified (420 staff members in 2017);
- 9 local control units (LCUs) which are ISO 17020 certified (approximately 660 staff members in 2017);
- 5 internal ISO 17025 certified laboratories (approximately 150 staff members);
- a department carrying out coordinated fraud control investigations; The National Investigation Unit (NIU) (approximately 20 staff members);

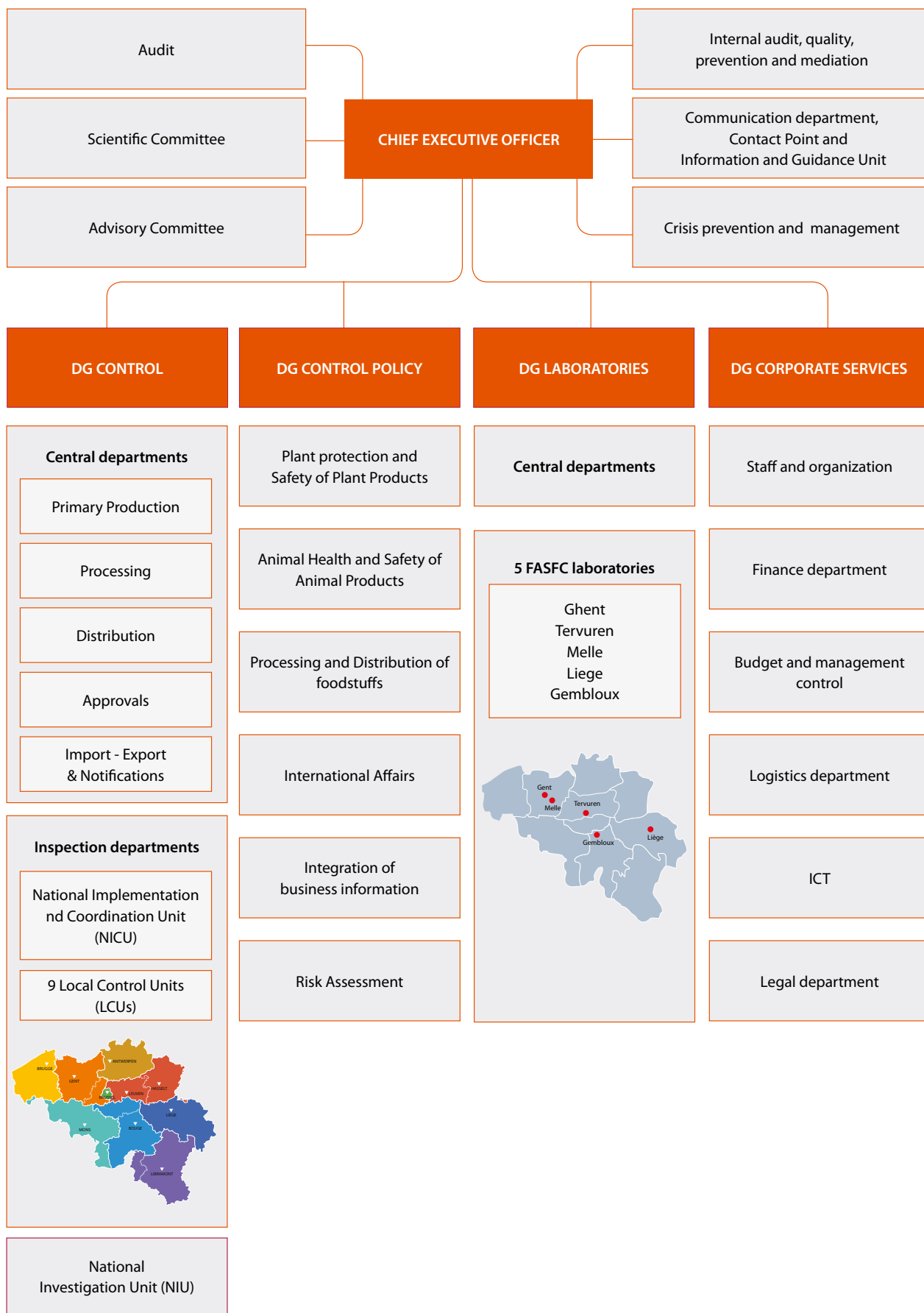
A close cooperation with various federal and regional public services, including police and customs and private institutions;

A budget of approximately €166 million.

To carry out its assignments the FASFC can count on:

Approximately 600 self-employed associates on assignment, which are the equivalent of about 350 FTEs; the Agency can assign inspections, checks, samplings, certifications and audits to these self-employed veterinarians, bio-engineers, masters, industrial engineers or bachelors or to legal entities (certifications, audits, samplings or checks);

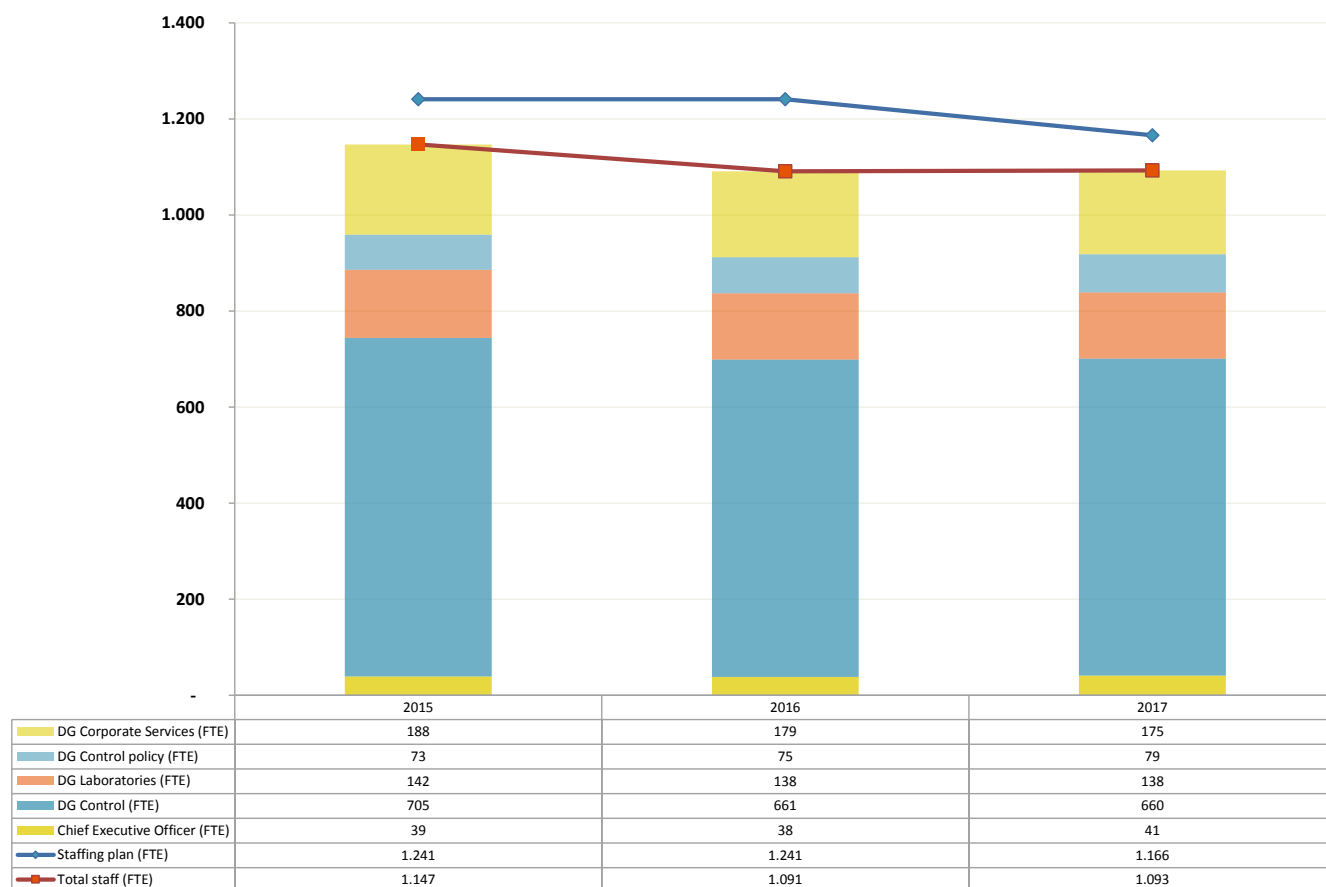
A network of approximately 60 external laboratories approved by the FASFC, and 9 national reference laboratories;



1.1. Personnel

The following graph represents the average number of FTEs for 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Since 2015, the savings imposed on the Agency have reduced staff numbers. In this context, the Agency has taken a host of initiatives to meet its staffing requirements.



FTE : full-time equivalent

1.2. Budget

In addition to a government allocation, which comes from public funding, the Agency has its own revenues. Since 2012, the government has imposed drastic savings measures.

For the FASFC this meant saving €1.782 million in 2017, 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 workload itself has not diminished.

Expenditure

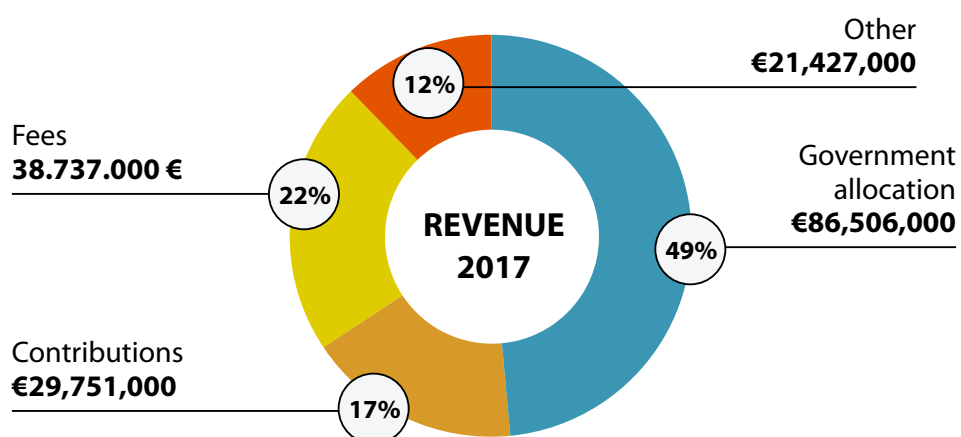
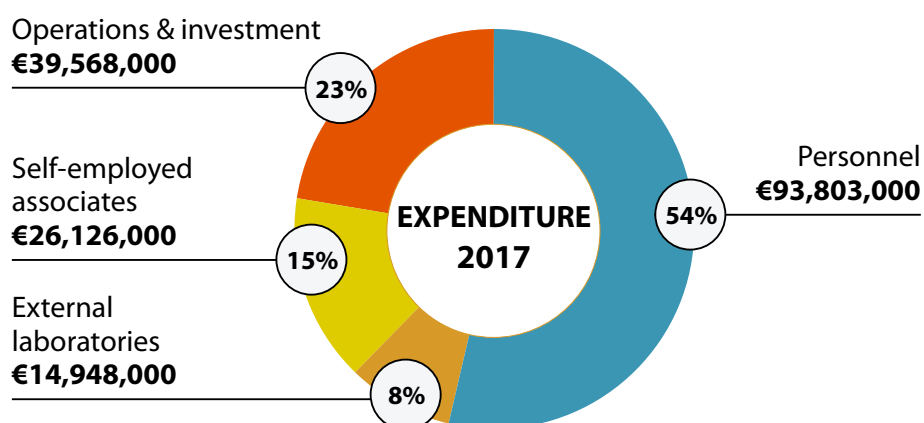
	Realizations 2015	Realizations 2016	Budget 2017	Realizations 2017
Personnel				
Wages and salaries	€86,000,000	€89,711,000	€87,791,000	€86,083,000
Other personnel costs	€7,499,000	€7,717,000	€7,937,000	€7,720,000
Operating costs				
Personnel-related operating costs	€7,263,000	€7,143,000	€8,819,000	€7,656,000
ICT	€6,363,000	€6,116,000	€8,348,000	€8,125,000
Services rendered by external associates	€28,269,000	€26,737,000	€25,648,000	€26,126,000
External laboratories	€15,892,000	€16,176,000	€15,501,000	€14,948,000
Other operating costs	€11,138,000	€7,542,000	€16,616,000	€15,477,000
Fipronil			€10,000,000	€5,351,000
Investments				
Equipment, furniture, ICT	€1,598,000	€2,287,000	€3,239,000	€2,959,000
Total expenditure	€164,022,000	€163,429,000	€183,898,000	€174,445,000

Revenue

	Realizations 2015	Realizations 2016	Budget 2017	Realizations 2017
Government allocation	€95,102,000	€87,556,000	€86,526,000	€86,506,000
Interdepartmental procurement	€2,958,000	€184,000	€7,300,000	€7,300,000
Staff FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment	€0	€5,776,000	€7,204,000	€7,204,000
Contributions	€30,875,000	€29,532,000	€27,607,000	€29,751,000
Fees	€39,487,000	€40,263,000	€39,289,000	€38,737,000
Miscellaneous	€3,005,000	€4,071,000	€6,198,000	€6,923,000
Total revenue	€171,427,000	€167,382,000	€174,124,000	€176,421,000

Moreover, the FASFC's government allocation for 2017 was reduced by €7.204 million corresponding to staff credits and associated overheads for the staff of the FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment working on the funds.

However, from these funds the FASFC recovers the equivalent credit through other income.



1.3. Business plan 2015 - 2017

The preservation of the core business, policy continuity with a focus on the protection of consumers and well-meaning and well-performing operators, a cautious evolution towards an even better organization in budgetary difficult times.

These are the main objectives of the Agency's business plan for 2015-2017.

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 the 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 businesses regarding food chain safety alimentaire 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 high-quality inspections and a maximum number of operators obtaining favourable inspection results.

Administrative simplification, attention to the specific situation of self-employed workers, micro-enterprises and small and medium enterprises, providing all the necessary tools and communicating clearly are also part and parcel of this policy.

The Agency will continue to be very understanding towards operators with good intentions, but it will adopt a hard-line enforcement policy towards obstinate or fraudulent operators.

The significant savings imposed on 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 safeguarded 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 FASFC is striving towards complete transparency by publicly reporting on its activities, using the food safety, animal health and plant health barometers as overall indicators.

Also when it comes to export, the FASFC 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 concerned- 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 also continue to be crucial partners. The FASFC will continue to pursue fruitful partnerships with first line veterinary practitioners.

Quality and effectiveness still remain the core of our approach. The FASFC 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. In the years to come, the FASFC wants to remain an excellent employer, despite the budgetary measures.



1.4. FASFC values

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

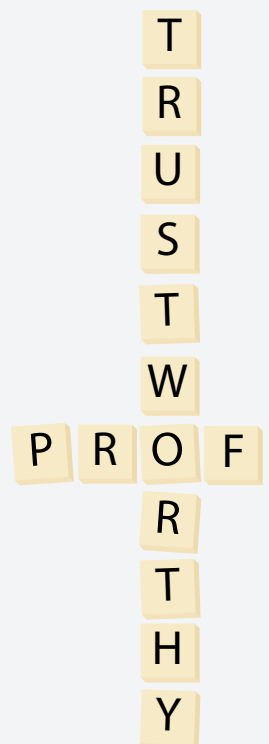
Professionnalism

The FASFC 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. Exchange of knowledge and permanent training guarantee our expertise.

Trustworthy

We create a positive environment in which opportunities are given and everyone takes their responsibility.

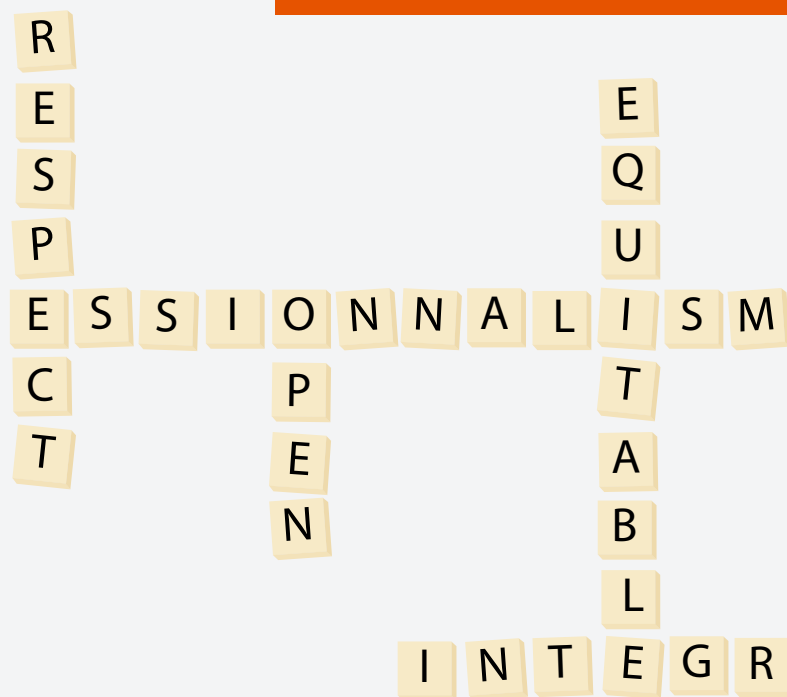
The focus is on loyalty and a constructive cooperation beyond borders.



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.

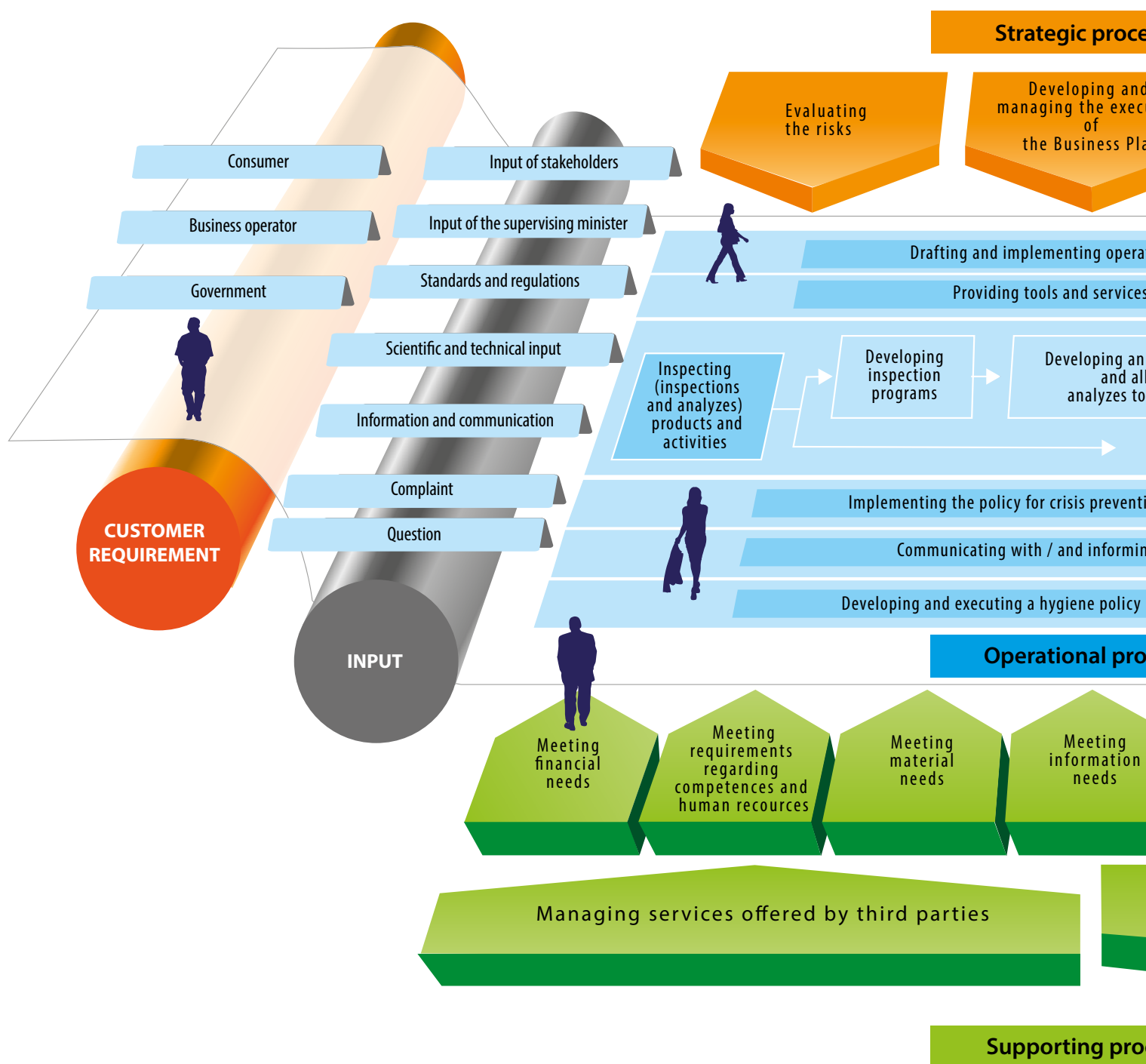
Open

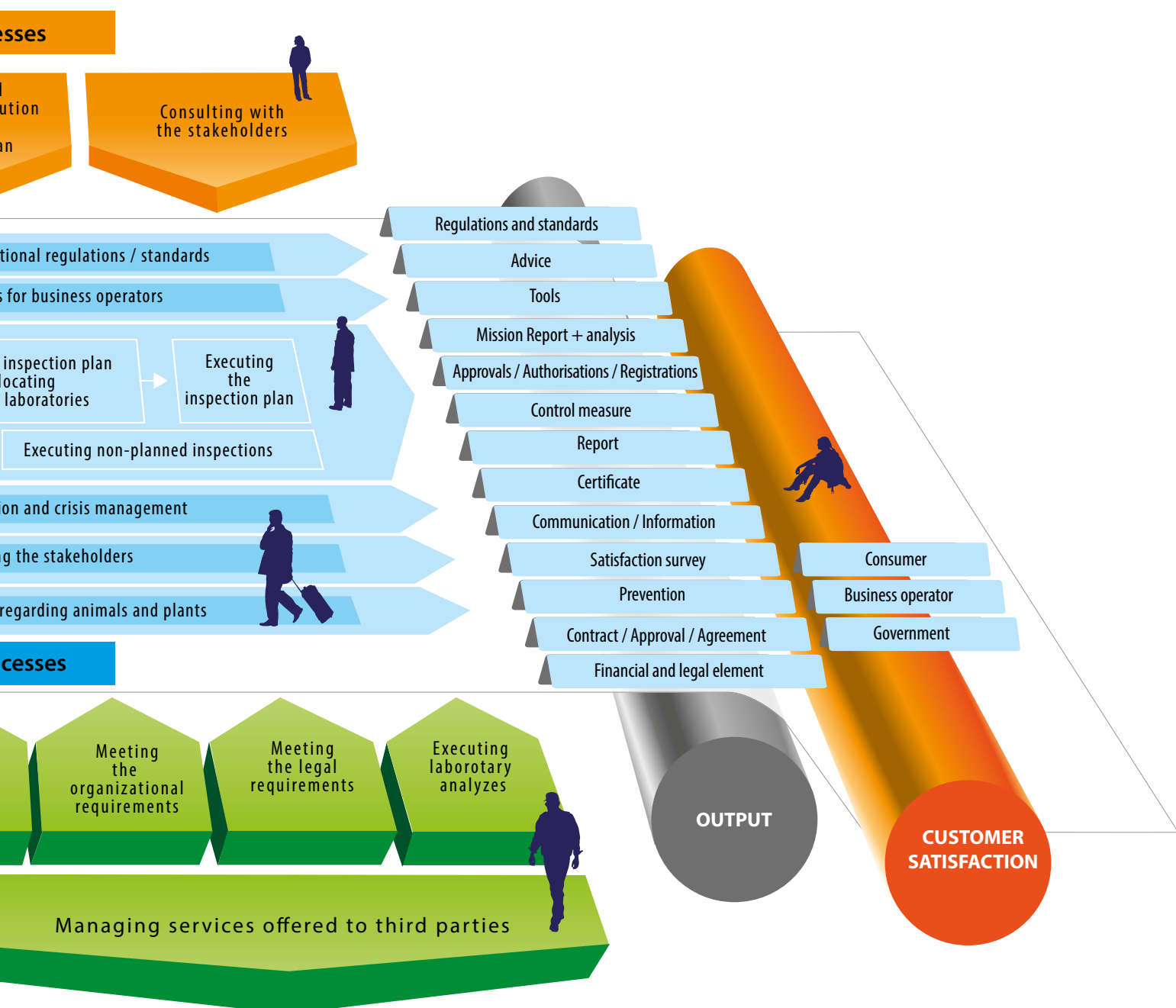
Our communication is timely, customized, clear and transparent.

We engage in constructive dialogue and pay attention to all interlocutors.

We encourage participation and are open to the ideas of others.

1.5. The FASFC's process model





1.6. Administrative simplification

The FASFC 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 information provision and awareness creation, but also with regard to legislation and procedures.

Administrative simplification played a key role in the business plans for the periods 2009-2011, 2012-2014 and 2015-2017.

Needless to say, this will not be any different in the business plan for the period 2018-2020. That is why, in late 2017, a survey was launched to gather sector proposals regarding this topic.

So far, the following streamlining measures have been taken:

Flexibility regarding self-checking in the B2C sector

The FASFC attaches great importance to small enterprises. In this respect, small enterprises benefit from a considerable amount of flexibility regarding self-checking requirements. A few important achievements are the following:

- The Agency has completely taken over the management of the guides for the B2C sector and is thus responsible for updating and printing the guides. In addition, these guides are made available to the operators free of charge on the Agency's (<http://www.favv-afsca.fgov.be/autocontrole-fr/guides/distribution/>). The generic self-checking guide for the B2C sector (<http://www.favv-afsca.fgov.be/autocontrole-fr/guides/distribution/generique/>), which was first published in 2016, consists of a generic practical manual that applies to all operators in the B2C sector, and specific modules that are applicable depending on the operator's activity(ies). A second version of the module "meat, meat preparations and meat products" was published in 2017. This module was expanded with information on the dry-ageing of meat.

In 2017, we also started drafting an update of the existing module "Soft-ice cream and ice cream" (sorbet was added) and the module "Production of dairy products" (pressed/(half-)cooked cheese was added to the module). We started drafting an entirely new module for fish shops. The drafting of a new module on the processing of fruit and vegetables is in the pipeline for 2018 and the practical manual will be complemented with a chapter on new cooking techniques.

- Quick start files were drawn up as a complement to the self-checking guides in the B2C sector to clearly and unambiguously explain the most important points an operator has to take into account to meet the legal requirements. In 2017, the quick start file on "mandatory notification", among others, was modified following the reorganization of the LCU's.
- Early 2017, a new website was launched to serve as an information and contact point to inform small businesses and self-employed food business operators on the legal requirements and provide them with guidance. This new website of the Information and Guidance Unit (<http://www.favv-afsca.fgov.be/cva/>) provides an overview of the ongoing guidance projects, trainings and initiatives of the unit as well as the results of research projects. In the future, the website will also provide useful and practical information for small businesses in their development or diversification phase.

Development of an interactive portal for the public and the operators

The Foodweb portal site allows the public to view the registration of food business operators and the results of inspections in establishments belonging to the distribution and the hotel and catering sector.

Through a secure access, operators can consult their administrative information regarding their registration at the FASFC, change their business activities, consult their inspection checklists, the results of their analyses, their self-checking status, invoices to be downloaded and their financial status, submit their annual declaration for contributions, consult ad-hoc documentation, as well as previous annual declarations (<http://www.favv-afsca.be/financement/contributions/>), ...

Operators are invited to submit and validate their email address (33% of the operators concerned in 2016 and 43% in 2017) and to indicate whether they want to receive their invoices by e-mail (20% of the operators in 2016).

Via the BECERT application, operators can also apply for their electronic certificates. BECERT is currently operational in all provinces and by the end of 2017, 102 models of electronic export certificates were already in use. In 2017, 4,692 certificates were issued in that manner. By the end of 2017, certificates for the export of pork, milk and dairy products to China were exclusively issued via BECERT. In addition, the BECERT application will be developed further in 2018 with additional models of electronic export certificates. The use of the BECERT application will be further promoted and will gradually become mandatory. Food business operators that are interested can get an API key to enable the XML exchange between their in-house business systems and BECERT.

Since late 2017, operators can manage their own access to Foodweb. In 2018, the access to the application will be secured even better by using eID.

Also in their daily activities, the Agency's staff members ensure administrative simplification and operator satisfaction.

1.7. Quality, safety, environment and internal control

In 2017, the efforts dedicated to developing an integrated quality, safety, environment and internal control management system mainly focussed on the method for implementing the process approach and risk management.

The review of the process cartography was finalized late 2017 and validated by the members of the Direction Committee. The objective was to verify whether all of the processes were in line with the vision of the users, the interpretation of the content could not give rise to confusion and whether the detail levels of the identified processes were coherent. This phase was important, since as of 2018, this tool will be deployed more broadly as a basic reference framework for the Agency's activities regarding numerous purposes, in particular the follow-up of objectives and analytical accounting.

The risk management methodology based on the guidelines of INTOSAI/COSA and the ISO 31000 standard "Risk management – Principles and guidelines" was further developed in 2017.

The reviewed list of processes, as well as the recording of data regarding risk management were included in the central "STROPS" database, which contains the Agency's operational and strategic objectives. This allows us to link all of the useful risk management data to the Agency's objectives, processes and projects and, by doing so, foster systematic reflection on possible threats and opportunities for the Agency.

To support the implementation of these methods, pilot projects and actions geared towards internal training and the documentation of methods were carried out in 2017. These activities will continue in the context of the new business plan for the period 2018-2020.

Following the publication in 2017 of the new version of the ISO 17025 standard, the DG Laboratories started analyzing the changes that have to be made to the quality management system. This new version of the ISO 17025 standard also emphasizes the importance of risk management following the

evolution of the other standards for risk management systems, such as the ISO 9001 standard.

The Agency's environmental management policy was maintained in 2017 after the EMAS registration ended in 2015. This allows us to maximize the use of resources:

In 2017, numerous projects to optimize the use of resources were carried out or launched:

- Restructuring of the PCU's,
- A new structure for specialized checks,
- Reducing expenditure,
- Rationalizing resources and administrative simplification.

1.8. Internal audit

From a methodological point of view, the internal audit is an impartial assessment of the Agency's operations which provides management with the guarantee that its activities are managed efficiently. Another important objective, from an organizational as well as from a technical point of view, is to offer avenues 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 certain departments of the federal executive government) demand that internal audits be carried out. This also constitutes an essential step for the validation (certification or accreditation) of the FASFC's quality management systems (ISO 9001, ISO 17020, ISO 17025 and ISO 17043).

The annual programme for the FASFC's internal audit is based on a multi-annual planning which lists the different domains to be audited. Among other things, this planning takes into account:

- the 5-year cycle (2017-2021) of the audit universe, as laid down in the European legislation (DG Sante);
- the execution of two central follow-up audits;

- second party audits conducted by external partners: tasks and responsibilities that fall under the Agency's competence are assigned to these audit bodies.

In addition, internal audits are programmed based on a risk analysis that is centred around 2 pillars:

- an audit universe of the ongoing processes in the FASFC (80 items);
- a sectoral audit universe based on Regulation 882/2004 and the Agency's business plan (30 items).

The topics for the finalized annual planning are subsequently distilled from a progressive, risk-based three-year planning to make sure that all of the domains are duly audited with the appropriate priority.

In 2017, the Internal Audit Unit conducted 18 out of 20 planned internal audits and the auditors of DG Laboratories audited all 59 planned scope lines. The audit results can be found in the full annual report on our website.

1.9. External audits

Audits by national bodies

The FASFC has further developed and updated its integrated quality, safety and environmental management system: following the external audits in 2017, the Agency kept its ISO 9001, ISO 17020, ISO 17025, and ISO 17043 certifications.

Audit by the European Commission

In 2017, the Directorate Health and Food Audits and Analysis of the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG Santé) carried out six audit missions in Belgium : 5 information missions and one audit.

The five information missions respectively pertained to:

- good practices and difficulties encountered by the responsible authorities in terms of the implementation of a risk-based approach according to the requirements of article 3 of Regulation (EC) N° 882/2004 when planning and conducting official inspections in the feed sector;
- risk prevention and surveillance measures concerning avian influenza in breeding poultry and wild animals;
- synergies between the official inspections and food business operators' self-checking systems and third-party certification requirements;
- the management of a food chain incident regarding the contamination of consumption eggs and poultry meat with an unauthorized substance (fipronil) and the ensuing actions;
- the policy pursued by the Belgian government to face the challenge of antimicrobial resistance. The latter mission was carried out in cooperation with the Direction Health and Food Audits and Analysis and the European Centre for disease prevention and control (ECDC).

The audit itself pertained to control systems used in the production of organic food and the labelling of organic products.

The final reports of the aforementioned missions are available or will be made available on the website of the European Commission (http://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit_reports/index.cfm).

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

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

In 2017, 12 delegations from Cuba, China, South Korea, Thailand, Mexico, Vietnam, Japan, Russia and the United States visited our country in the context of the export of plants, animals, feed and certain foodstuffs. Nine delegations have carried out an audit to evaluate the Agency's control system in this respect.

1.10. International profile

The FASFC 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 2017, the FASFC hosted 20 foreign delegations. During these delegations, the working methods and the missions of the FASFC were explained. In some cases, the goal was to open up new markets. In other cases, they were information visits to gain an insight into the organization of the FASFC.

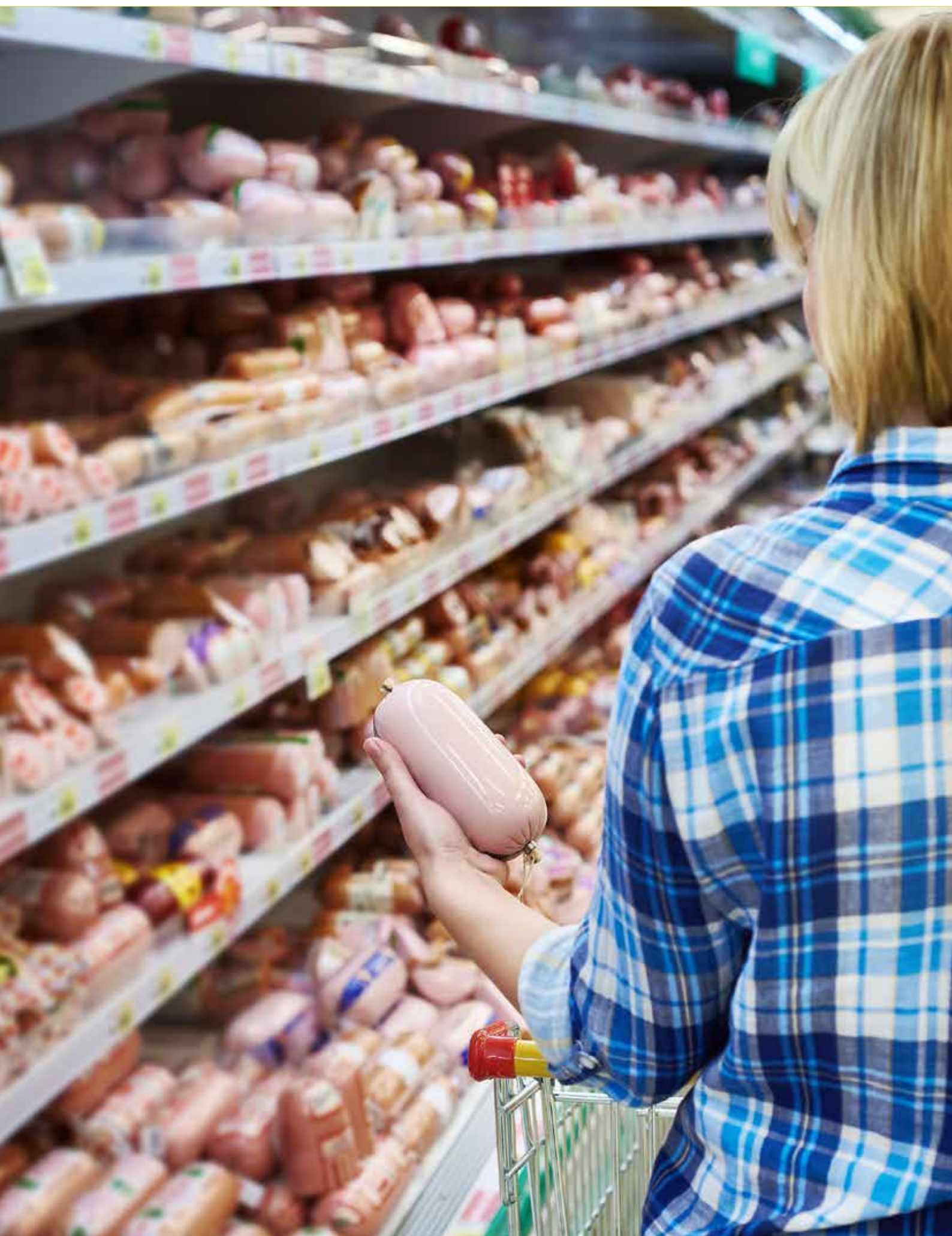


The FASFC at the service of consumers and professionals

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The consumer remains at the centre of the Agency's policy. The inspection programmes are aimed at keeping the risks for consumers to a minimum in the stage that precedes the purchase. 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 FASFC has been taking several initiatives to train and guide professionals in order to improve food safety and hygiene conditions. Prevention, awareness creation and information provision are the Agency's most important objectives.

Communication in figures

		2015	2016	2017
Press releases (including product recalls and allergen warnings).		132 (63%)	126 (64%)	180 (44%)
Visits : www.fasfc.be		1,360,599	1,149,621	1,440,810
Consumer newsletter	Publications	3	4	3
	Subscribers	12,461	12,165	11,200
Contact point for consumers	Questions	5,907	6,987	8,870
	Complaints	3,772	3,652	3,804
Information unit	Sessions	337	338	366
	Participants	9,480	8,364	8,821
Brochures	Publications	9	16 (4 new and 12 revised)	8 (2 new and 6 revised)
Newsletters for veterinarians	Subscribers	7,776	6,533	6,749
	Publications	17	39	49
Newsletters	Subscribers	3,733	4,458	6,147
	Publications	420	477	561
Mediation department	Complaints	89	94	127
Advisory Committee	Members	39	36	36
	Plenary sessions	8	8	8
Facebook	Subscribers	4,114	5,266	10,169
	Published messages	122	130	243
Twitter	Subscribers	1,107	1,451	2,024
	Published messages	120	130	243

2.1. Publication des résultats d'inspection

At the end of the first semester of 2015, the FASFC 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 Agency 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.

FASFC inspections are carried out by means of standardized checklists. These checklists allow for harmonized and transparent inspections. The checklists are primarily technical documents which were developed to conduct efficient inspections. Consequently, these documents are not easily understood by a layperson. For this reason the Agency believes that publishing the completed inspection checklists is not the best way to inform consumers.

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

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 single 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 these non-compliances. This system was developed in close consultation with the sector organizations, as well as with the consumer organizations and all the other actors of the Agency's Advisory Committee.

In 2016, a few changes were made to the system for the publication of inspection results. For example, extensive information about the meaning of the symbols used, was made available in FoodWeb. In addition, a number of changes were introduced for the benefit of the food business operators. Since the system's introduction, they can now consult a history of their published results in Foodweb, and thus follow the evolution of their results in a simple manner. Since early 2017, operators can also print their authorization or registration posters. They can choose to print their authorization or registration with or without the inspection result. If the operators choose to print their authorization or registration with the inspection result, they undertake to keep the poster up-to-date and, therefore, replace it when the inspection result changes. There is no obligation to display the inspection result.

Additionally, the FASFC 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 Agency'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.

2.2. Contact point for consumers

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



In 2017, the contact point received 3,804 complaints, which is a 4.2 % increase compared to 2016.

The complaints mainly pertain to the hygiene of premises and people (1,194 complaints), production and conservation methods of foodstuffs (1,018) and possible food poisonings (809).

Each complaint leads to an investigation by the Local Control Unit (LCU) concerned.

What stands out is the strong increase in the number of questions: 8,870 compared to 6,987 in 2016 (+26%). This increase can mainly be attributed to the fipronil incident in August: no less than 1,345 questions pertained to this incident.

2.3. Consumer newsletter

In 2017, the FASFC published 3 consumer newsletters. These newsletters deal with current topics and food safety-related issues and were sent to 11,200 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. These checks take place nation-wide and are not announced in advance.

In 2017, 4 targeted actions were organized.

Action “smoked salmon”

In the context of this action, samples were taken from farmed and wild smoked salmon in the distribution sector in West Flanders, Antwerp, the Brussels-Capital Region and Hainaut. In total, 110 samples were taken for analysis of residues of medicines (antibiotics and antiparasitic agents, avermectins, benzimidazoles and pyrethroids), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHCs), dioxins and PCBs. All results were compliant

Action “fresh fruit salad”

In the summer of 2017, the FASFC carried out targeted microbiological analyses of fruit salads. 110 samples were taken of pre-cut and packaged fruit in retail shops across Belgium. These samples were analyzed for hygiene indicators (E. Coli, coagulase-positive staphylococci, yeasts and fungi) and pathogenic bacteria and viruses (Listeria monocytogenes, Salmonella spp., STEC, Hepatitis A-virus en Norovirus). All results were compliant.



Action “buffet meals”

The FASFC carried out a special action in hotel and catering establishments across Belgium. 99 samples were taken from buffet meals: 49 warm meals and 50 meals to be consumed cold. The samples were analyzed for several microbiological parameters: Enterobacteriaceae, total aerobic germ count, Staphylococcus coagulase +, Bacillus cereus, Clostridium perfringens, Salmonella spp. and Listeria monocytogenes. No pathogenic organisms were found. In 6 samples, the reference values were exceeded for a few hygiene indicators.



Action “colourants in sweets”

In the context of this action, a total of 110 samples were taken from all kinds of coloured and pre-packed sweets available in retail stores. In total 11 different colourants, for which different maximum levels apply, were analyzed. The purpose of this action was to verify compliance with the maximum levels of colourants and to check whether unauthorized colourants are used in sweets. One sample was non-compliant

2.5. Company Discovery Day

For more than 20 years now, a Company Discovery Day is organized in Belgium on the first Sunday of October. The Agency has already participated in this event for five years in a row. In 2017, an interactive food safety-themed tour “Feel good with safe food” was organized in the FASFC Laboratory in Melle. Approximately 1,600 people visited the laboratory.

During this open day, visitors were given the opportunity to discover the work of our laboratories, more particularly the Melle laboratory: What analyses are performed, why and how?

The visitors were also given the opportunity to find out what the Food Agency’s inspectors do.

The inspectors of the Local Control Unit of East Flanders were present at the event to explain their job to the visitors: what are checklists, where and why are they used? All this was explained by means of concrete examples.

Of course, the visitors got the chance to ask their questions directly to the inspectors on this open day and there was a quiz that tested their food safety knowledge.

The press was also invited to attend this event.



2.6. Self-checking systems and sector guides

Since 2005, all food business operators have to implement a self-checking system to provide consumers with safer food. In order to help operators meet this obligation, the professional organizations draw up self-checking guides which are validated by the FASFC.

The FASFC has been encouraging sector organizations for several years to develop clear and didactic guides, which so far has resulted in 34 approved sector guides. These documents are made available to the parties concerned via the Agency's website.

The FASFC helps the professional sectors draw up the guides. In order to facilitate the implementation of self-checking in businesses, relaxations were provided. Until early 2013, these relaxations 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 relaxations have been extended to all B2C establishments by means of a new ministerial decree, regardless of the establishment's size.

These relaxations allow establishments to implement the HACCP procedures described in the guide, so that they will no longer have to conduct their own risk analyses. This largely facilitates the implementation of self-checking in small businesses with low staff levels and little scientific expertise (<http://www.favv-afscs.fgov.be/autocontrôle-fr/assouplissements/>).



In 2014, the FASFC has 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 paid to the FASFC and a reduced inspection frequency. In previous years, it had already been established that respectively the Vegaplan Standard and the Sectoral Guide for primary production (modules A – plant production and B – roughage), as well as the FCA standard (Feed Chain Alliance, previously known as GMP feed) and the self-checking guide on feedstuffs are equivalent. A similar equivalence was also established for the Vegaplan Standard for Agricultural and Horticultural Contractors and the Self-checking guide for Agricultural and Horticultural Contractors in the Primary Plant Production”.

Les guides d’autocontrôle pour les établissements qui délivrent directement aux consommateurs (B2C) sont sous la gestion de l’AFSCA qui les rédige en concertation avec les secteurs concernés, les imprime et les publie sur son site web.

<http://www.favv-afsca.fgov.be/autocontrôle-fr/guides/distribution/>

Ils sont accompagnés de fiches quick-start.

<http://www.afsca.be/autocontrôle-fr/guides/qs-fiches/>

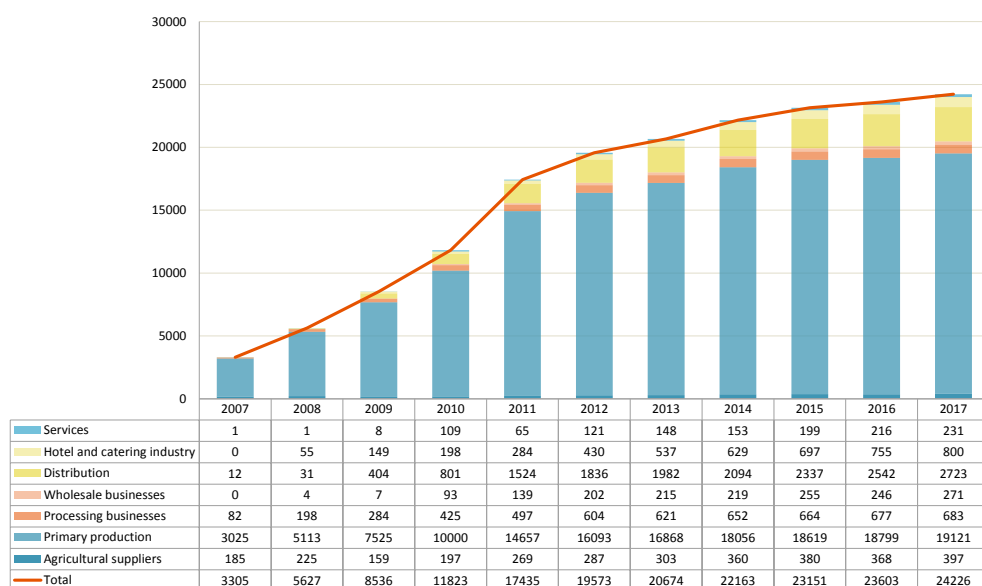
More details on the relevant versions that are equivalent can be found on the website (<http://www.afsca.be/autocontrôle-fr/equivalence/>).

Operators who have had their self-checking system validated benefit from a reduced inspection frequency by the FASFC and get a discount on their annual contribution. The audits are based on the approved self-checking guides and are performed using checklists drawn up by the FASFC in consultation with representatives of the professional associations concerned. For some activities not yet covered by a guide (a guide is available for more than 99% of the operators), the FASFC has developed specific tools to help the businesses.

In the sectors for which a guide is available, audits may be conducted by the FASFC, but generally, they are carried out by one of the 14 accredited and approved certification bodies. Based on private tender specifications, these certification bodies can conduct audits simultaneously with the self-checking validation audits. These “combined audits” allow for a reduction of costs.

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

By the end of 2017, 24,226 establishments had a validated self-checking system covering all of their activities.



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



In 2012, the FASFC 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 FASFC smiley. By the end of 2017, this number had risen to 3,473.

The smiley is awarded by the OCI that conducts the audit and is valid for 3 years. The list of businesses that have a smiley can be consulted on the website: <http://www.afsca.be/smileys>.

These initiatives taken by the FASFC to help companies set up their self-checking systems and also promote the validation thereof, aim to improve the results of the inspections and reduce non-compliances thanks to increased awareness among the operators of their impact on the safety of the food chain. This policy is aimed at ensuring that food on the consumer's plate becomes increasingly safe.

2.7. Concultancy

The Agency's Advisory Committee issues opinions on all issues pertaining to policies adopted or to be adopted by the FASFC, 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 FASFC 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 36 members representing the main business sectors, consumer associations and the authorities concerned.

The FASFC also regularly consults with the sectors and national and international institutions, more precisely the European Commission and the OIE (World organization for Animal Health). Technical consultations between the professional associations and the departments of the Agency's DG Control Policy also take place multiple times a year.

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

2.8. Training and guidance of professionals

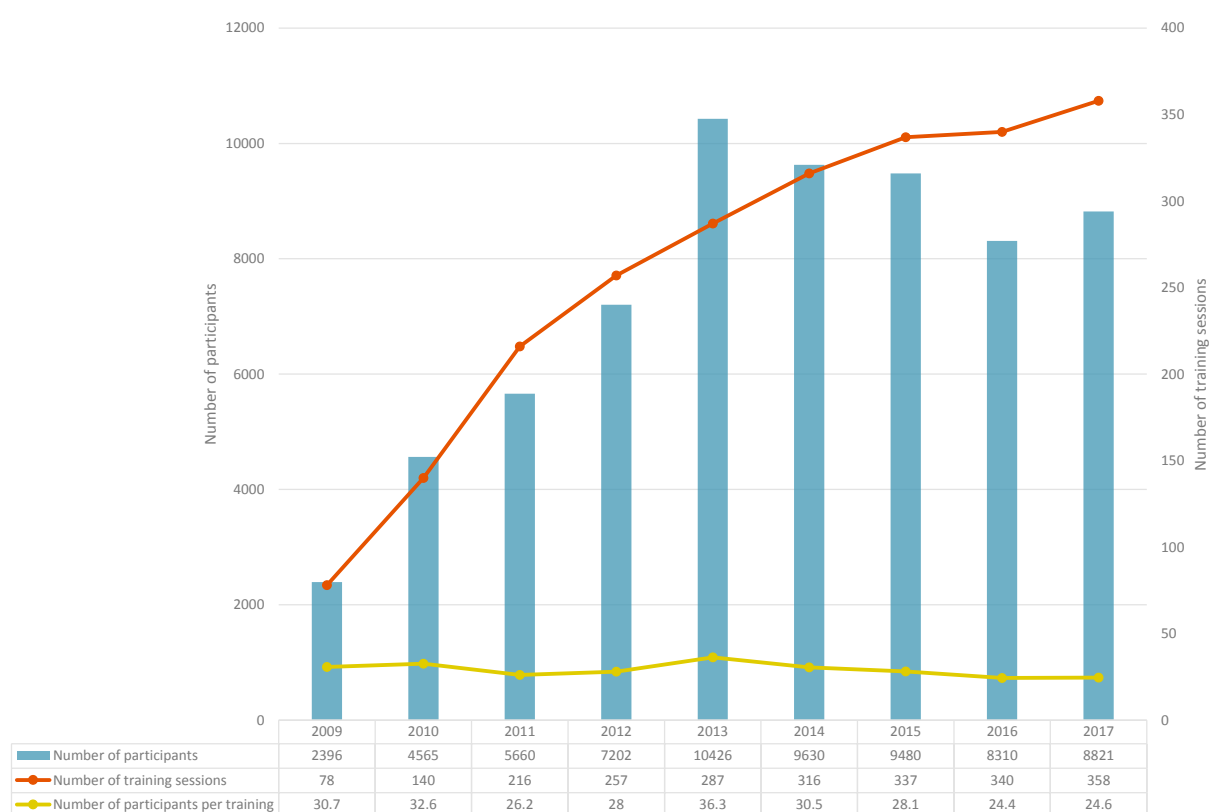
A number of initiatives are listed below that are aimed at encouraging operators to follow training and obtain information.

- The inspection checklists are published on the Agency's website, which gives operators the opportunity to see exactly what an inspection is all about.
- Each year, the FASFC carries out about ten announced, local inspection campaigns in the B2C sector. In the context of these inspection campaigns the FASFC, in cooperation with the municipalities involved, always organizes preliminary training sessions to which all operators are invited.
- The FASFC's information unit organizes free training sessions for groups of food business operators who deliver directly to consumers. More precisely, it focusses on small businesses that have difficulties understanding regulations.
- Since early 2011, hotel and catering industry professionals have the opportunity to have their administrative fines dropped, provided that the entire staff of the establishment concerned attends a training session specially organized for this purpose by the information unit.
- Educational materials are made available to the operators 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 operators and explain to them how inspections are conducted.
-
- The FASFC makes the self-checking guides available to the B2C sector free of charge in order to provide operators 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 inspections carried out receive individual follow-up. In case of an unfavourable inspection, the sanctions depend on the weight 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 initiating 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 operators who have received a sanction (PV, warning) and have taken measures to comply with regulations continue to do so in the long run: a certain percentage of these operators (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 unit

The FASFC's information unit has been operational since 1 September 2008 and helps food business operators who have direct contact with consumers (hotel and catering industry, retailers) comply

with regulations. To this end, the Agency organizes training sessions for groups of food business operators.



Training 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,...) the FASFC, in cooperation with the professional associations of the hotel and catering industry, since 1 January 2011, has been offering operators the opportunity to have their administrative fines dropped, provided that they attend a training organized by the FASFC's information unit. This action only applies to the first fine and does not apply to fines concerning the smoking ban.

In 2017, 58 training sessions (53 in 2016) were organized for 1,038 participants (1,082 participants in 2016).

Guidance unit for small-scale producers and small enterprises

In order to ensure the production of safe food, legislation imposes all kinds of obligations on food producers. Small-scale producers cannot always easily find their way in legislation and provide all means necessary to ensure food safety.

The guidance unit is the point of contact for operators seeking information on food safety legislation. To meet the expectations of small-scale producers and small enterprises, the guidance unit also takes part in various events and fairs specifically geared towards this target group.

The unit answered more than 200 questions via mail between 1 March and 31 December 2017. Most of these questions pertained to the cultivation of vegetables, the processing of fruit and vegetables, the production of honey, the processing of dairy, the sale of eggs, the on-farm sale of meat, beer brewing, ...

In order to have more direct contact with these small-scale producers, the guidance unit participates in fairs, seminars and various other events. Also in 2017, the unit participated in ten public events.

In order to inform food business operators, the guidance unit developed its own website (<http://www.favv-afsca.fgov.be/cva/>). This site has been available since March 2017 and provides information on all of the unit's activities. Since its creation in 2017, the website has been visited more than 22,000 times.

The guidance unit also coordinates a "guidance consultation platform". This platform holds a meeting once a year to draw up a general overview of the difficulties facing food business operators, the requirements imposed by the different authorities, the available types of guidance and the operators' needs. In 2017, the platform held 3 meetings.

The platform consists of sector representatives, producer associations, the Regions, training and guidance centres and all organizations that regularly come into contact with small-scale producers. The platform unites 35 organizations and has about sixty members.

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 export impediments require a proactive approach, more extensive cooperation between the different governments and the corporate world, as well as a more efficient use of available resources. On the European and the global level, governments and companies are faced with the same challenges.

Consequently, the FASFC has taken several initiatives that are geared towards improving the service provision to Belgian exporters. Among other things, the FASFC promotes cooperation between and close consultation with all of the partners involved (companies, federal and regional administrations).

Specific sectoral sampling plans for the export to third countries (non-EU countries)

The third country requirements often differ from the requirements imposed by 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 reviewed and validated by the Agency on an annual basis.

For several years now, the Association of Belgian Horticultural Cooperatives (VBT) and the Association of exporters of fruit and vegetables (Fresh Trade Belgium), have a sampling plan intended to demonstrate that their products meet the requirements of third countries in terms of pesticide residues. The Belgian Feed Association (BFA) has a sampling plan which contains certification guarantees for feed exported to Macedonia, the Russian Federation, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

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 market by means of a sectoral sampling plan.

BECERT

BECERT is an application aimed at digitalizing the certification process for the export to third countries (non-EU countries) in the context of administrative simplification, traceability and fraud control.

Since 2017, BECERT has been operational in all provinces and the number of available certificates has increased: 102 models of certificates have been in production since the end of 2017.

In 2017, the focus was on adding models of certificates, which led to the issuance of 4,692 certificates. The certificates for the export of pork, milk and dairy products to China were exclusively being issued via BECERT by the end of 2017.

BECERT provides the possibility to:

- request, create, register, print and issue export certificates;
- consult the export certificates that were issued;
- register all of the information pertaining to a specific certificate in a single database,
- work in an ergonomic, safe and efficient way,
- improve the quality of the data by linking the database to other databases.

In a first stage, BECERT will be used to digitalize export requests 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 food business operators – 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 FASFC's crisis prevention policy is not merely aimed at trying to prevent incidents, but also pays a lot of attention to incident mitigation. The crisis prevention and crisis management department endeavours to mitigate incidents in several ways.

- Capture of signals: by continuously improving the capture of potential crisis signals, the FASFC tries to keep the finger on the pulse. The signals intended here are elements of information that might predict an impending incident or crisis. In this respect, it is important to capture and recognize these signals as soon as possible, so as to ensure an appropriate reaction. In the context of capturing signals, more attention is also paid to data profiling based on the ample data available to the Agency.
- Simulation exercises: Simulation exercises are the best way to keep the Agency's expertise in incident management in the food chain up-to-date. Such expertise is not only important for the FASFC (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 FASFC 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 FASFC takes part in the exercises which the CCCG organizes on a regular basis.

- Operational resources: 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 FASFC either purchases this equipment or these tools or it concludes stand-by contracts that ensure a guaranteed provision of the service or delivery of the equipment (for example: a contract for culling poultry, an antigen bank or a vaccine against animal diseases: foot-and-mouth disease, Q fever, etc.).

2.11. Mediation department

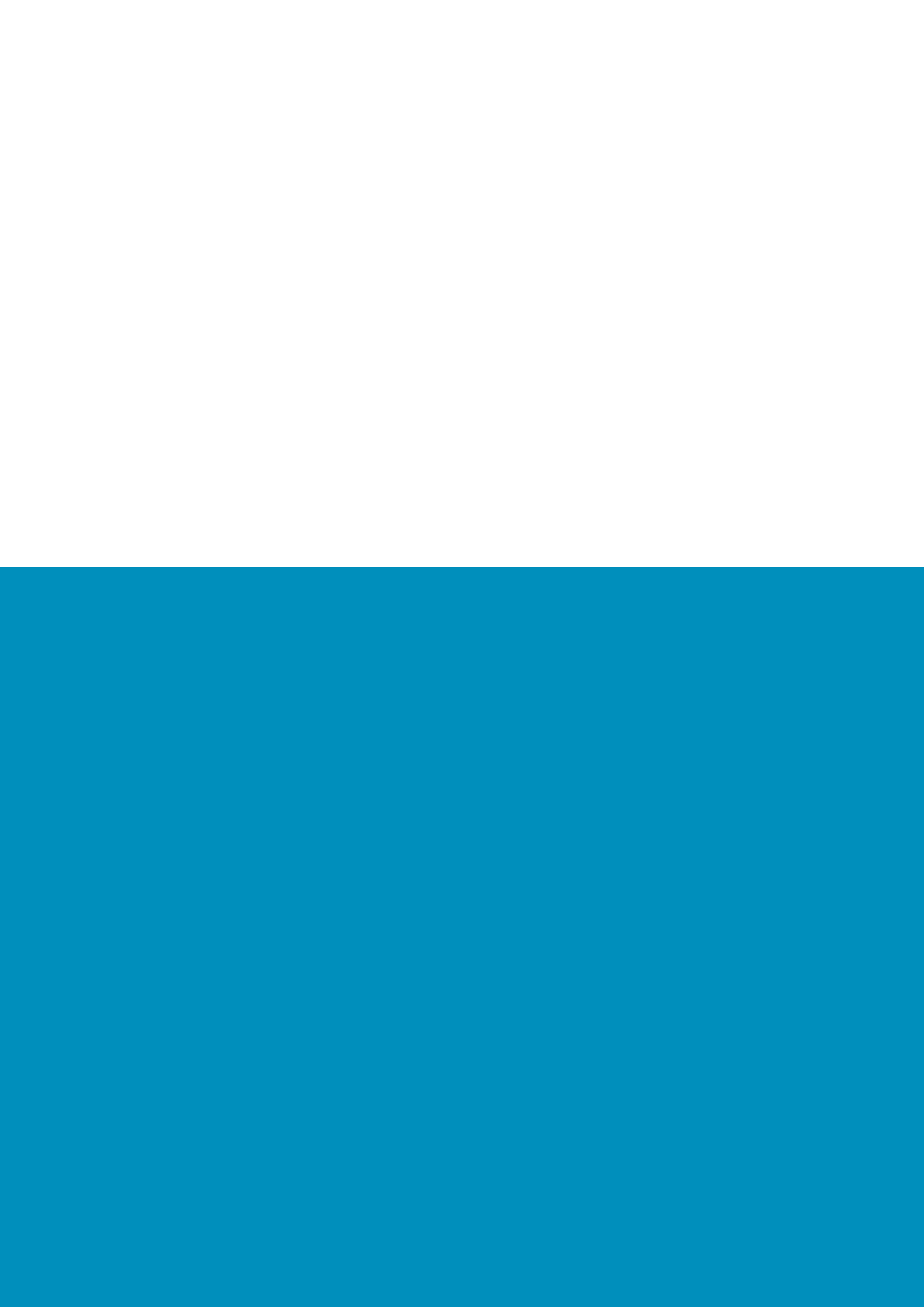
The mediation department was founded in 2005 in the spirit of open government and is characterized by the complete impartiality of its decisions.

The mediation department handles all complaints pertaining to the functioning of the FASFC. This department offers a listening ear to all partners of the FASFC, in the first place to food business operators. The information obtained via these channels allows the Agency to continuously improve its work methods.

In 2017, the mediation department processed 129 complaints, more than half of which pertained to inspections conducted by the FASFC and the financing of these inspections (challenges to invoices regarding contributions or fees). 91% of these complaints were handled within 2 months and less than 31% of the complaints were found to be partially or entirely justified.

If the analysis of the complaint points to a structural problem within the FASFC, the mediation department describes possible avenues for improvement, which are communicated to the Agency's management. In 2017, the Agency identified 3 items to be remedied, which will receive follow-up.

In 2017, the mediation department also received 121 requests for information mainly concerning the interpretation of Belgian and European regulations.



Our core business: Inspections

4

3



Since it was founded in 2000, the Belgian Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain has been conducting inspections in the entire food chain, from farm to fork.

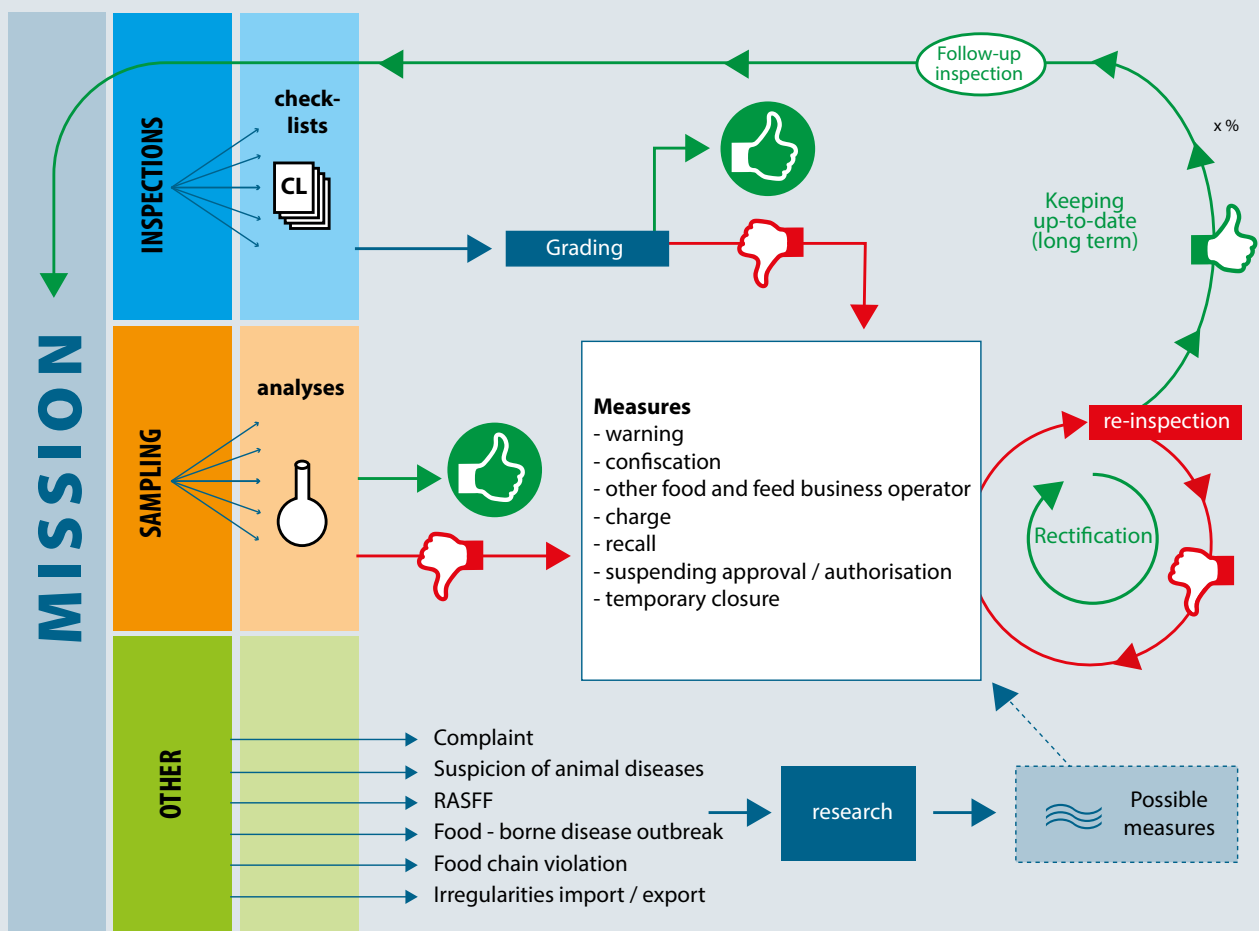
By now, most consumers, self-employed workers and businesses have heard of the FASFC, but the Agency's activities are less known. However, a lot of information is made available via the Agency's website.

MANCP

The FASFC draws 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 FASFC, other instances are also involved in 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 FASFC's business plan. The MANCP is available on

<http://www.favv-afsca.be/apropos/mancp/>



Each food business has to be registered at the FASFC 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 operator'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 the operator 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 FASFC 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 on a **specific investigation assignment**, which is subsumed under the heading "miscellaneous" in the scheme, for example because of a European warning, a food-borne outbreak, 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 must 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 food business operators 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 food business 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.

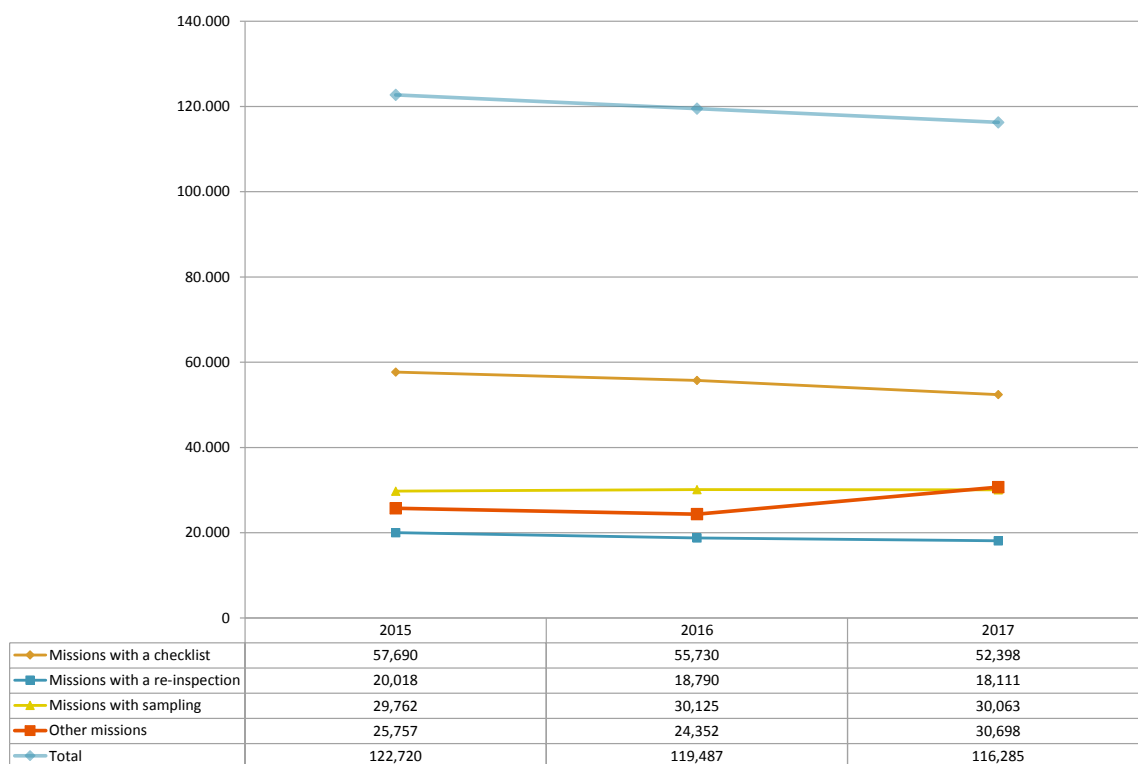
Following specific investigation assignments, measures can possibly also be taken.

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

Each inspection requires the mutual respect of both parties, the inspector and the food business operator. 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.favv.be/publicationsthematiques/Charte-controleur.asp>

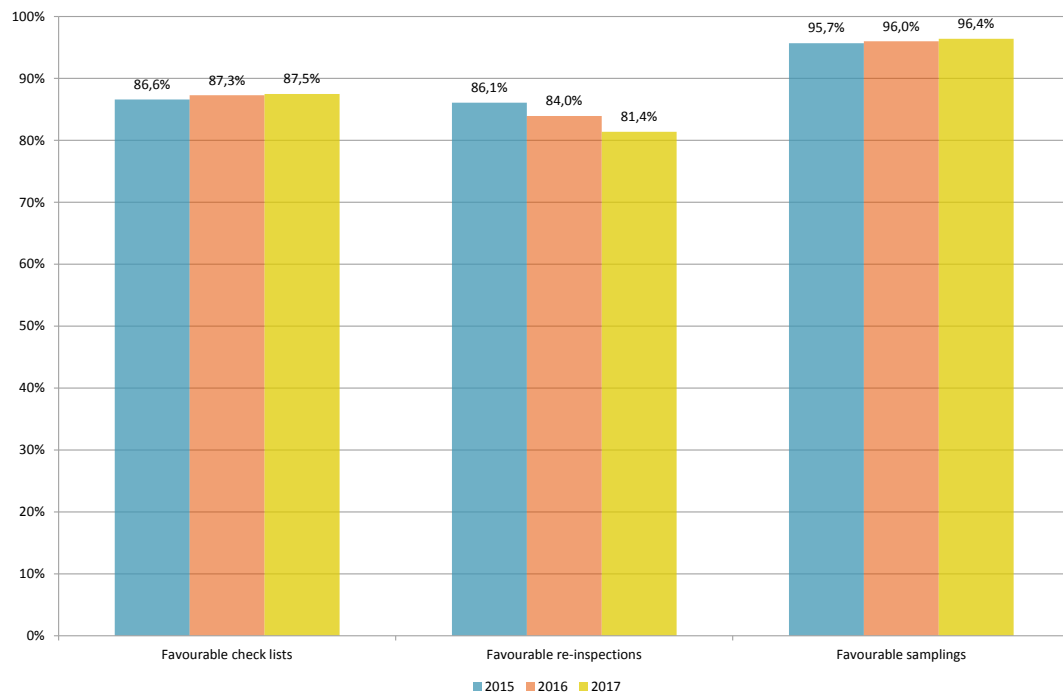
3.1. Inspection results

Number of missions	Number of operators
116,285	62,393

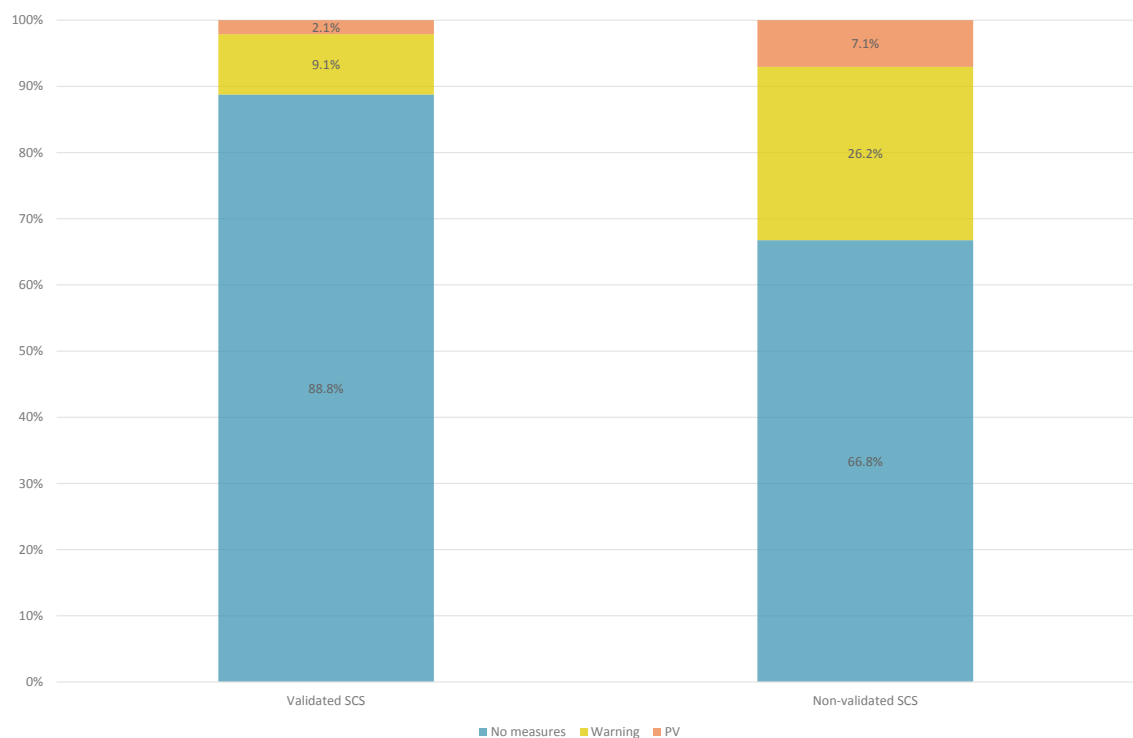


During a mission, various types of checks (inspections, samplings and other checks) can be carried out simultaneously. Consequently, the total number of missions is thus smaller than the sum of the different checks.

Inspection results



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



Results of the checklists: all sectors

	2016	2017	2017 vs. 2016 (%)	Compliance 2016 (%)	Compliance 2017 (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	53,296	18,732	-64.9	78.1	93.0
Infrastructure and equipment (prior to granting the approval)	337	297	-11.9	91.7	91.2
Infrastructure, installation et hygiène & autocontrôle	-	29,926	-	-	65.6
Self-checking system	25,152	4,032	-84.0	79.5	87.3
Traceability	40,211	34,886	-13.2	89.5	88.6
Mandatory notification	31,502	26,640	-15.4	98.3	98.2
Administrative data operators	47,289	44,268	-6.4	87.2	88.7
Phytosanitary checks	2,992	2,699	-9.8	Not applicable	
Plant protection products	2,935	2,797	-4.7	89.9	90.0
Animal Health	1,280	4,056	+216.9	95.4	94.5
Medicines and veterinary guidance	5,315	5,239	-1.4	97.0	94.8
Epidemiological surveillance	3,332	-	-	94.1	-
Animal welfare	9,613	8,925	-7.2	Not applicable	
Transport of live animals	894	-	-	99.6	-
Animal by-products not intended for human consumption	4,697	4,008	-14.7	93.3	92.5
Labelling	11,235	12,829	+14.2	87.5	85.1
Food contact materials	587	-	-	90.5	-
Foodstuff by-products	1,001	1,088	+8.7	98.9	98.5
Smoking ban	11,603	10,214	-12.0	94.9	95.6
Transport	1,853	2,665	+43.8	97.6	90.3
Export approval	118	110	-6.8	97.5	97.3
Others	118	-	-	83.9	-
Total	255.360	213.411	-16,4	87,3	87,5

As of 2017, a new inspection checklist for infrastructure, equipment, hygiene & self-checking was used to conduct checks in the B2C sector. For food business operators in the B2C sector, the inspection of the self-checking system is carried out simultaneously with the infrastructure, equipment and hygiene inspection.

The objective of this inspection is to verify whether compliance with the temperature requirements is regularly checked and if records are kept. In the case of institutional kitchens that prepare and serve food on site, the self-checking system is inspected separately from infrastructure, equipment and hygiene. The reason for this is the greater risk associated with the large-scale production of foodstuffs.



Results of the analyses

Number of missions	Number of business operators	Total samplings	Favourable samplings
30,063	12,807	73,394	96.4%

	Number of samplings 2017	Favourable samplings (%) 2016	Favourable samplings (%) 2016
Additives and aromas	2,518	97.7	96.9
Allergens	24	98.8	87.5
Quality – composition	2,513	92.8	93.8
Radiation	135	100	100
GMOs	352	98.7	98.6
Dioxins and PCBs	2,907	99.9	99.7
Mycotoxins	2,311	98.9	99.1
Heavy metals	1,874	99.2	99.4
PAHCs	801	99.7	100
Marine biotoxins and histamine	164	100	88.4
Migration from food contact materials	1,060	98.5	98.6
Radioactivity	174	100	100
Other contaminants	697	97.9	96.6
Contaminants for which no norm was established	287	Not applicable	Not applicable
Indicator micro-organisms	8,226	91.4	91.3
Pathogenic micro-organisms	19,204	96.0	96.8
Residues of pesticides	5,625	97.7	96.1
Medicines	18,666	99.2	99.0
Other prohibited substances	96	92.3	87.5
BSE	1,413	96.6	97.5
Plant health	6,832	89.9	92.7

A detailed description of all the inspections carried out by the FASFC would be beyond the scope of this report. However, the inspection results can be consulted in the full activity report and are available on the website www.afsca.be.

A few notable results are described in the following chapters.



3.2. Primary production

Plant production

Inspection results

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	3,414	98.9
Infrastructure and equipment (prior to granting the approval)	1	100
Self-checking system	14	78.6
Traceability	3,522	97.7
Phytosanitary checks	2,223	Not applicable
Plant protection products	2,626	89.7
Total (inspections concerning 'phytosanitary checks' are not included)	9,578	95.9

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	255
PVs (procès-verbal)	141
Seizures	207
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	10
Others	16
Total	629

These include farms (vegetables, fruit, arable crops, seed vegetables ...), ornamental horticulturists, landscape gardeners, agricultural and horticultural contractors, manufacturers and repairers of wood packaging materials (ISPM-15), plant gardens, forests and green zones, tree nurseries, as well as operators who import plant protection products for their own use.

The 2017 results are similar to those in 2016, except for the results regarding infrastructure, equipment and hygiene, which have improved.

Animal production – Animal husbandry*Inspection results*

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	7,052	98.3
Traceability	5,520	81.3
Plant protection products	1,522	90.8
Animal Health	3,945	94.7
Medicines and veterinary guidance	5,159	94.7
Animal welfare	4,996	Not applicable
Animal by-products not intended for human consumption	3	100
Total (inspections concerning 'animal welfare' are not included)	23,201	92.3

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	1,347
PVs (procès-verbal)	168
Seizures	157
Temporary closures	1
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	67
Others	30
Total	1,770

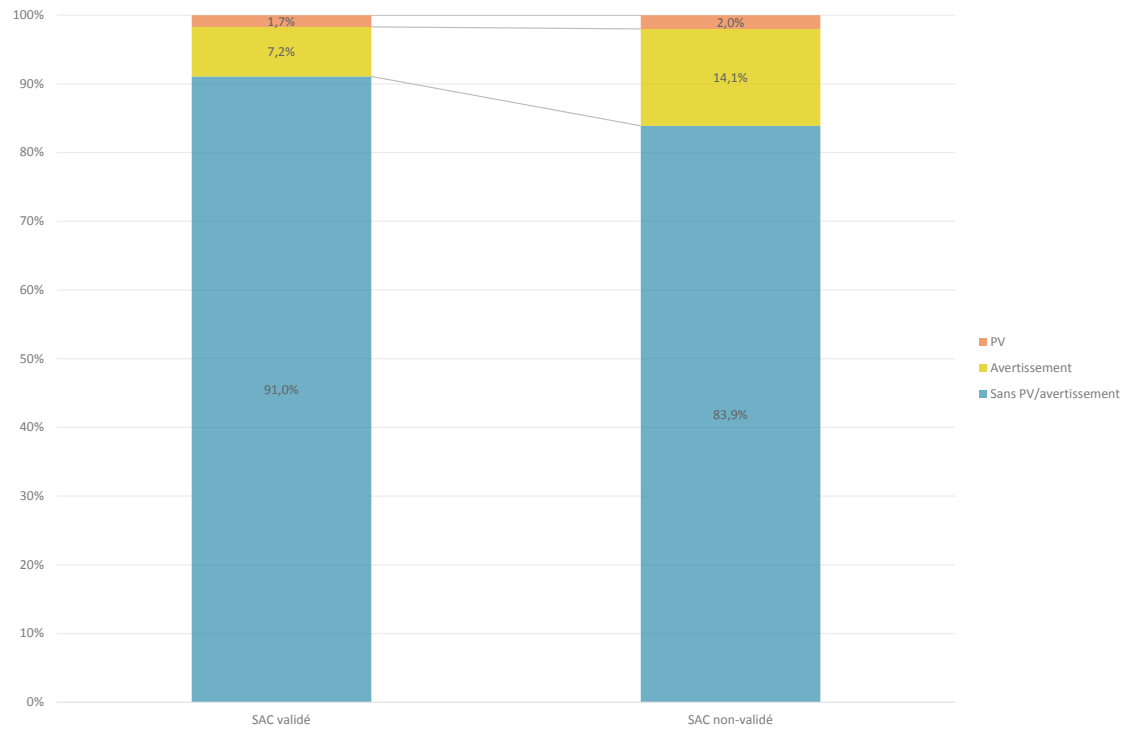
In 2017, the traceability inspections turned out to be less favourable in cattle farms, pig farms and sheep and goat farms. For cattle, the most frequently encountered non-compliances pertained to animals that had lost an ear tag and for which the cattle farmer had not immediately taken the necessary steps to replace the lost tags. It was also discovered that the passports of dead animals were sometimes returned too late.

The most frequently encountered non-compliances for pigs pertained to the visitors' register, the movement document, and the discrepancy between the categories, the number of pigs registered in Sanitel and the actual situation. For sheep and goats the problems mainly pertained to the register and the movement document, as well as to the identification of animals older than 6 months.

The results of the inspections regarding veterinary medicines and veterinary guidance were also less favourable in 2017. The non-compliances mainly pertained to veterinary guidance and the bimonthly signing of the visitors' register and the four-monthly reports by the farm veterinarian.

We also found shortcomings regarding the information that has to be included on the labels of veterinary medicines, as well as with regard to the justification of the administration of veterinary medicines by the cattle farmer during the risk period.

The results of the missions in the primary production sector are considerably better for those establishments that have a validated self-checking system (SCS).



3.2.1. Residue of pesticides

The use of pesticides in the cultivation of vegetables, fruit and arable products may result in residues thereof in food and feed. The maximum residue limits (MRLs) are laid down in European legislation so that the correct use of pesticides can be checked (the use of products approved for cultivation, compliance with the recommended dosage and the pre-harvest intervals) to protect consumer health: (http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/max_residue_levels/index_en.htm). MRL are not toxicological limits. When the MRL is exceeded, this does not necessarily pose a risk to the consumer - in fact it very rarely does, but is a sign of misuse of pesticides.

Food and feed in which the residues exceed the MRL may not be marketed.

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

General analysis results for residues of pesticides (analyses conducted in the context of the fipronil incident not included)

Matrix	Inspection motive	Number of samplings	Favourable Samplings	Favourable samplings* 2017 vs. 2016 (%)
Feed	Inspection plan**	79	98.7	+1.6
Baby food	Inspection plan**	93	100	=
Water Food and Non-Food	Inspection plan**	141	100	+0.9
Vegetables, fruit, cereals and other plant products	Inspection plan**	2,156	98	+0.2
	Regulation 669/2009****	363	95	+0.5
	Follow-up of non-compliances***	68	76.5	+5.9
Products of animal origin	Inspection plan**	1,265	99.8	-0.1
	Follow-up of non-compliances***	2	100	=
Processed products of plant origin	Inspection plan**	78	98.7	-0.9
Total		4.244	98,1	+0,4

* taking into consideration the analytical uncertainty of the result

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

*** targeted samples that are analyzed following non-compliances that were found in the context of the inspection plan, complaints, ...

**** targeted samples that are analyzed in the framework of the reinforced import checks

Overall, there has been an increase in the number of compliant results.

Compliances according to the origin of the foodstuffs in the context of the inspection plan (fruit, vegetables, cereals and other plant products)

Product origin	Favourable samplings (%)
Belgium	98.3
EU Member States	98.7
Third countries (non-EU countries)	96.2

3.2.2. Phytosanitary checks

In 2017, the FASFC conducted 6,832 analyses on plants, plant products, soil and other materials that may be carriers of harmful organisms; 92.7% of the samples were compliant. The non-compliant results are mainly due to fire blight (*Erwinia amylovora*).

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 the legal requirements. The FASFC delegates a considerable amount of samplings to the Regions, in particular in the seed potato cultivation sector.



3.2.3. Dairy farmers

Inspection results

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	224	85.7
Self-checking system	146	92.5
Traceability	145	80.7
Labelling	188	91.5
Total	703	87.6

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	65
PVs (procès-verbal)	4
Seizures	3
Others	2
Total	74

This includes the dairy farmers who primarily sell the largest part of their production output directly to the consumer.

Compared to 2016, there has been a slight decrease in the number of favourable inspection results regarding traceability. This is due to the changes made to the checklist, which consisted of grouping the questions regarding the IN and OUT registers and increasing the weightings.

3.2.4. Animal Health

Belgium is officially free from various diseases in cattle and pigs: bovine leucosis (since 1 July, 1999), bovine brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis (since 25 June, 2003), Aujeszky's disease (since 4 October, 2011). Belgium is also free from several other diseases, such as foot and mouth disease, rabies, Newcastle disease in poultry, classical and African swine fever and bluetongue (since 15 February 2012).

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 FASFC's sanitary policy is aimed at maintaining disease-free status for animal diseases and extending its 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 coming from countries that are not officially free from certain diseases upon entry in Belgium and analysis and monitoring of newly emerging diseases or re-emerging animal diseases.

The FASFC entrusts an important part of the 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 veterinary 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 quality of the databases used for vaccination campaigns and animal health inspections) and allocates €10 million per year to this health surveillance.

Bovine brucellosis

Ever since the brucellosis incident at the end of 2010 and early 2012, with a final outbreak early 2013, not a single bovine brucellosis outbreak has been detected.

The surveillance programme provides for a mandatory investigation in the case of abortions and investigations of certain cattle farms selected on the basis of a risk analysis:

- herds into which bovine animals were introduced in the last three years that come from Member States or third countries that are not officially free from brucellosis;
- herds in which no cases of abortion were investigated (on an annual basis); and
- herds for other sanitary and epidemiological reasons.

All dairy farms were screened again twice a year by means of examination of tank milk. In 2017, all results were favourable.

Bovine tuberculosis

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

The measures taken for the last outbreak in 2016, were lifted early 2017 after the complete cull and cleaning and disinfection of the buildings and installations.

A new outbreak of bovine tuberculosis was discovered during the winter monitoring of 2016-2017. Four secondary outbreaks could be identified by means of the epidemiological investigation. For three of these cattle farms, a complete cull was ordered. In the two other cattle farms, a partial cull was carried out and these farms continue to be monitored in 2018.

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 wide variety 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 afterbirth.

In 2017, 9,964 abortions in cattle were investigated. This is a decrease compared to 2016 (10,209).

The number of abortion investigations remains high owing to the financing by the FASFC of the investigations conducted in the framework of the abortion protocol and the collection of the materials to be examined. Not a single case of brucellosis was found. The pathogenic agents identified were: Neospora, Schmallenberg, BVD, Salmonella.



3.2.5. Antibiotics resistance

The Belgian authorities pay a great deal of attention to antimicrobial resistance, both in humans and in animals. Not only is the situation being followed closely by monitoring antimicrobial resistance (analyses of commensal bacteria and zoonoses in meat and animals) and the use of antibiotics, but concrete measures are also being taken and prepared 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 operators from the sector, the Agency makes a financial contribution to and cooperates 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. These initiatives have brought about a 20% drop in the sales of antibiotics between 2011 and 2016.

2017 – One health in the limelight

In 2017, the first annual report on the activities and the 2016 results of the management committee of the Agreement signed between the Federal Government and the relevant sector partners regarding the reduction in the use of antibiotics in the animal sector was published. Compared to 2011, the general use of antibiotics has been reduced by 20% (the goal is a 50% reduction by the end of 2020). There has been a 56% reduction in the use of critically important antibiotics (the goal is a 75% reduction by the end of 2020) and a 38.2% reduction in the use of feed medicated with antibiotics (the goal is a 50% reduction by the end of 2017). The strong decline in the use of critically important antibiotics in 2016 (-53%) is partly due to the Royal Decree laying down the framework for the use of critically important antibiotics, which entered into force in August 2016.

In 2017, the registration by the veterinarian of the use of antimicrobial substances in pigs, veal calves, laying hens and broiler chickens in Sanitel-Med, a central database managed by the FAMHP, also entered into effect.

The fight against antibiotics resistance is the prototype of a 'one health approach'. In 2017, we hosted two international delegations for an audit/visit in the framework of the 'one health approach', namely the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for the 'Joint external evaluation of Belgium' and the European Commission and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) for the 'One health AMR country visit'. The reports of these delegations are published on the respective websites. The FASFC designated a 'one health' contact point to improve the contacts in this respect and strive towards harmonization of the files.

Since 2011, the FASFC has been monitoring the antimicrobial resistance of zoonoses and indicator germs in calves, young bovine animals, pigs, poultry and animal products. Since 2014, the monitoring harmonized on the EU level has been fully integrated into the national monitoring. Antimicrobial resistance of, among others, *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, as well as the occurrence of ESBL-, AmpC- and carbapenemase-producing *E. coli*, is monitored. The detailed results can be found on the Agency's website (<http://www.favv-afsca.be/productionanimale/antibioresistance/>). The European results are published annually in the EU Summary report on AMR on the website of the EFSA (<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/5182>).



3.2.6. Slaughter

All animals must be examined before and after slaughter. These examinations are called inspections. The primary objective of these inspections is to guarantee the protection of public health by tracing and excluding from human consumption meat that shows abnormalities, or that is contaminated with

pathogens or residues of veterinary medicines or contaminants. The inspections are usually carried out by a self-employed veterinarian on assignment (an official veterinarian). In addition to the inspection itself, the official veterinarian also conducts checks pertaining to food chain information (FCI), specified

	Inspected carcasses	Seized carcasses
Cattle	548,177	2,264 (0.4%)
Calves	374,620	278 (0.1%)
Pigs	10,978,554	28,751 (0.3%)
Horses	5,614	28 (0.5%)
Sheep	139,238	208 (0.1%)
Goats	16,144	72 (0.4%)
Poultry	305,026,056	3,648,674 (1.2%)
Rabbits	2,671,367	54,119 (2.0%)
Farmed deer	912	0 (0.0%)
Ratites	161	0 (0.0%)

risk materials (measures taken with regard to BSE or mad cow disease) and other by-products, lab tests, hygiene, infrastructure and self-checking. If an animal welfare violation is found, the regions will be notified.

Inspection results

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	321	66.4
Self-checking system	292	91.8
Traceability	308	98.1
Animal welfare	1,817	Not applicable
Animal by-products not intended for human consumption	305	90.8
Labelling	305	98.7
Total (inspections concerning 'animal welfare' are not included)	1,531	88.9



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Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	115
PVs (procès-verbal)	13
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	5
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	7
Others	4
Total	144

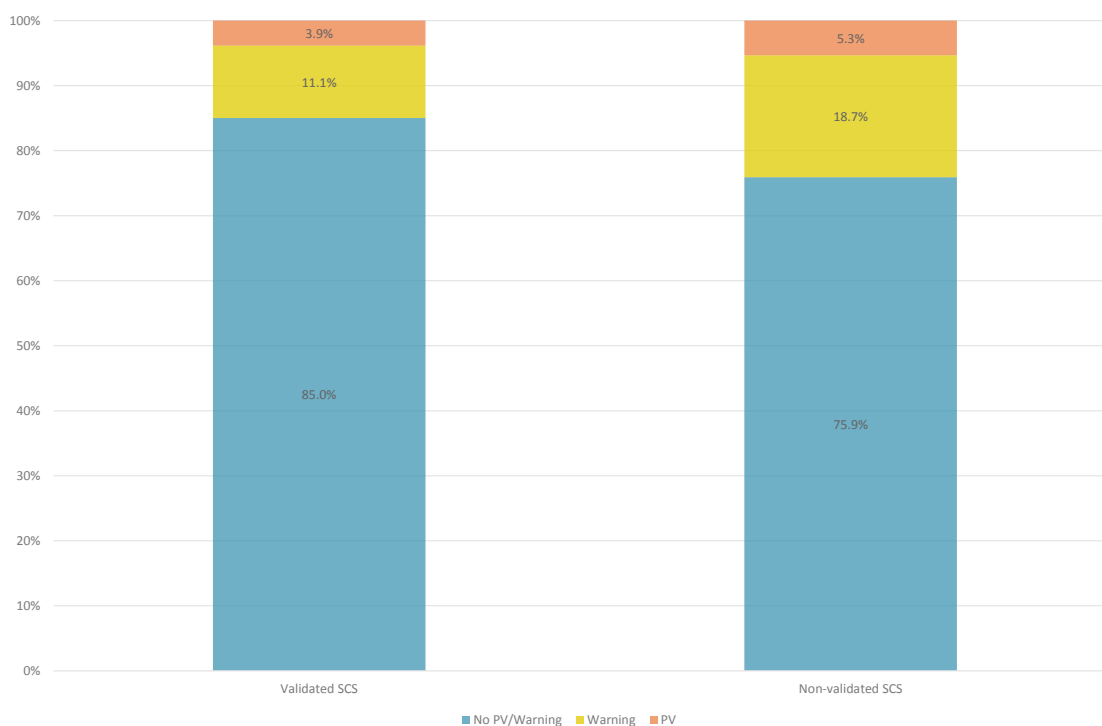
3.3. Processing of products

Results of the 5,109 missions carried out in 4,235 food processing establishments

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	7,375	89.2
Infrastructure and equipment (prior to granting the approval)	288	92.4
Self-checking system	3,028	85.4
Traceability	4,315	93.6
Mandatory notification	3,966	98.9
Animal by-products not intended for human consumption	1,728	96.7
Labelling	5,402	92.1
Foodstuff by-products	1,016	98.5
Transport	291	95.2
Total	27,409	92.4

Overall, the 2017 inspection results are comparable to the results in 2016, except for the inspections concerning the self-checking system and transport, which are less favourable.

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



Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	885
PVs (procès-verbal)	260
Seizures	127
Temporary closures	2
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	14
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	13
Others	55
Total	1,356



Cutting plants

Inspection results

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	1,018	87.3
Infrastructure and equipment (prior to granting the approval)	42	95.2
Self-checking system	432	89.1
Traceability	475	93.7
Animal by-products not intended for human consumption	425	96.7
Labelling	845	97.5
Total	3,237	92.5

The 2017 results are comparable to the results in 2016.

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	111
PVs (procès-verbal)	32
Seizures	11
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	4
Others	10
Total	168

Meat products*Inspection results*

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	1,955	91.6
Infrastructure and equipment (prior to granting the approval)	65	98.5
Self-checking system	619	87.4
Traceability	963	94.6
Animal by-products not intended for human consumption	806	97.4
Labelling	1,521	97.0
Total	5,929	93.9

These results are comparable to those of 2016, except for “infrastructure and equipment (prior to granting the approval)” and “self-checking systems”. The results for “infrastructure and equipment (prior to granting the approval)” have improved in 2017, whereas the “self-checking system” results are less favourable.

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	161
PVs (procès-verbal)	52
Seizures	18
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	8
Miscellaneous	12
Total	251

3.4. Distribution of foodstuffs

Wholesale businesses

Inspection results

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	1,188	90.1
Self-checking system	982	89.3
Traceability	808	92.6
Phytosanitary checks	138	Not applicable
Labelling	2,387	90.9
Foodstuff by-products	322	99.7
Total (inspections concerning 'phytosanitary checks' not included)	5,687	91.2

These inspection results are comparable to the results in 2016.

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	305
PVs (procès-verbal)	89
Seizures	31
Temporary closures	1
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	3
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	8
Others	11
Total	448

Butchers*Inspection results*

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene & self-checking	1,960	58.6
Traceability	1,774	86.8
Animal by-products not intended for human consumption	1,715	90.6
Labelling	1,083	83.3
Total	6,532	78.7

The results are comparable to the results in 2016, except for the inspections concerning “Infrastructure, equipment, hygiene and self-checking”, which were less favourable.

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	709
PVs (procès-verbal)	226
Seizures	39
Temporary closures	4
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	1
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	12
Others	19
Total	1,010

Bakeries

Inspection results

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene & self-checking	1,276	57.5
Traceability	963	84.9
Labelling	381	76.1
Total	2,620	70.3

These results are comparable to the results in 2016, except for the inspections concerning “Infrastructure, equipment, hygiene and self-checking”, which are less favourable.

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	463
PVs (procès-verbal)	177
Seizures	11
Temporary closures	15
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	10
Others	4
Total	680

Other retailers (fish shops and transport not included)*Résultats d'inspection*

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	24	87.5
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene & self-checking	7,091	72.9
Traceability	4,392	87.0
Labelling	4,373	76.1
Total	15,880	77.7

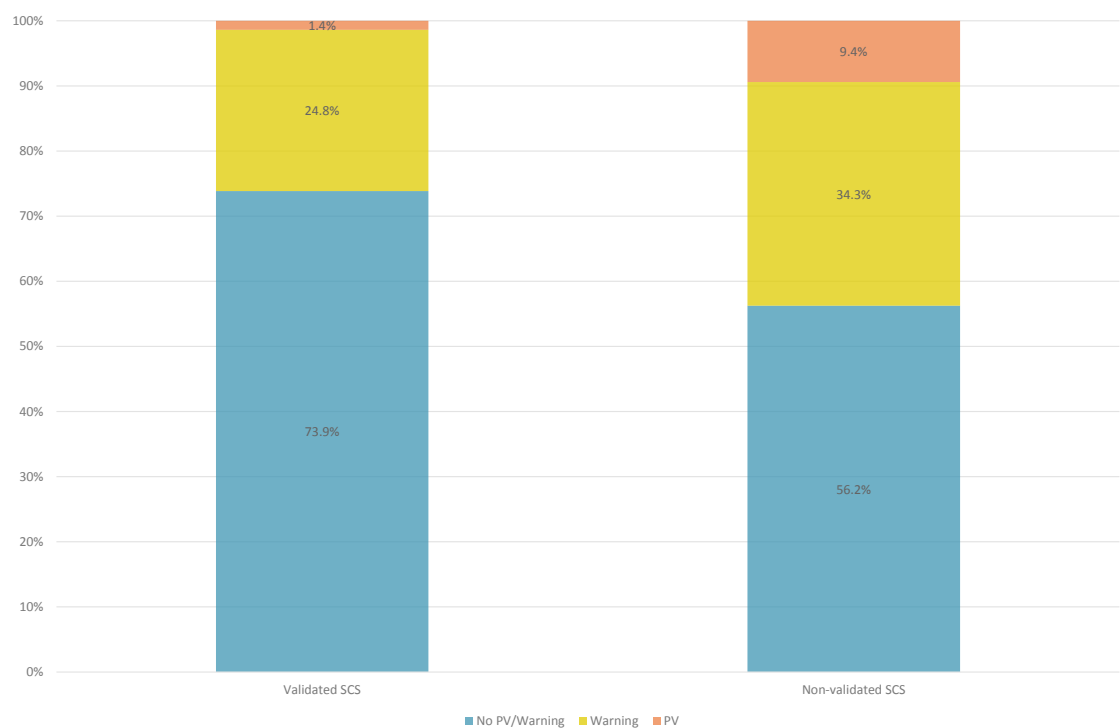
Overall, the results are slightly less favourable than in 2016.

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	2,235
PVs (procès-verbal)	650
Seizures	162
Temporary closures	13
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	3
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	46
Others	44
Total	3,153

3.5. Hotel and catering industry and institutional kitchens

The inspection results for hotel and catering establishments and institutional kitchens are considerably better for those establishments that have a validated self-checking system (SCS).



Hotel and catering industry

Inspection results

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment, hygiene & self-checking	12,450	57.2
Traceability	8,103	85.4
Smoking ban	10,213	95.6
Total	30,766	77.4

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	4.696
PVs (procès-verbal)	1.470
Seizures	108
Temporary closures	40
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	1
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	28
Others	90
Total	6,433

The overall inspection results are similar to the results in 2016.

Just like in 2016, the most severe non-compliances in terms of hygiene pertained to:

- the lack of communication of allergen information to the customer (69.1% in the case of oral communication and 38.6% in the case of written communication); the lack of facilities for washing hands with running water and/or liquid soap and/or a hygienic hand-drying system (15.3%);
- non-observance of the temperatures of cooled food and the cold chain (10.8%),
- inadequate cleanliness of surfaces that come into contact with food (10.3%); and
- the presence of spoiled food or foodstuffs whose use-by-date has expired or which are unfit for human consumption (10.0%);

Institutional kitchens

Résultats d'inspection

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene & self-checking	6,585	78.3
Traceability	3,038	93.1
Total	9,623	83.0

Measures following non-compliances

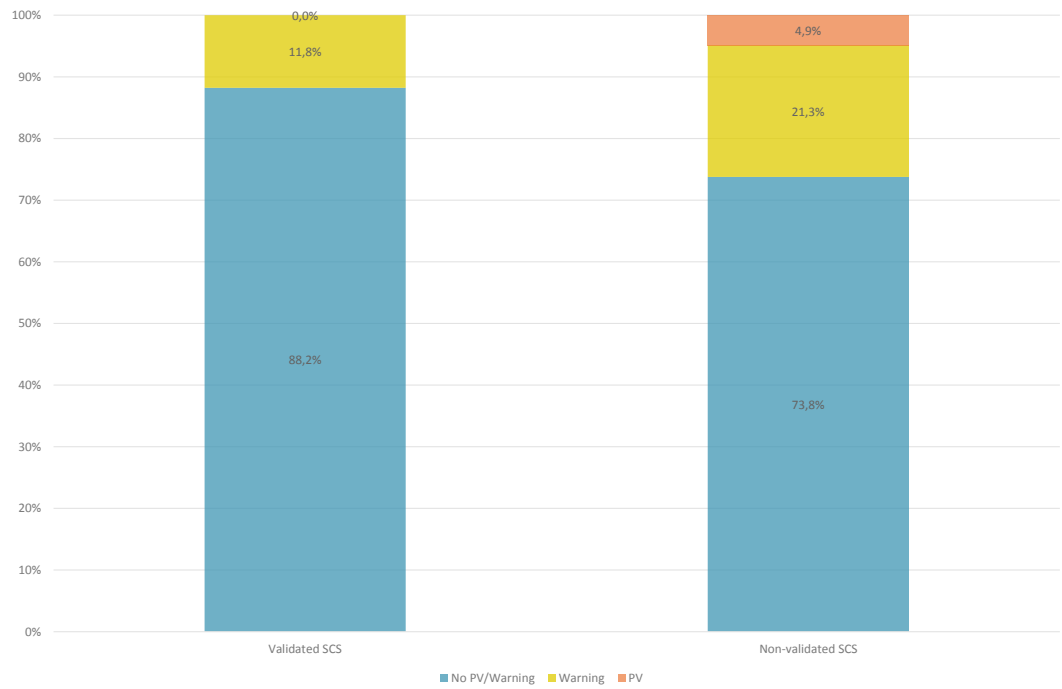
	Number of measures
Warnings	1,231
PVs (procès-verbal)	84
Seizures	12
Measures following non-compliances at another operator's premises	14
Others	16
Total	1,357

The overall inspection results are similar to the results in 2016. The inspection results concerning "Infrastructure, equipment, hygiene and self-checking" in hospitals and prisons have improved.



3.6. Food contact materials

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



Results of the 242 inspection missions conducted at 242 manufacturers and wholesalers of materials intended to come into contact with foodstuffs

	Number of checklists	Favourable checklists (%)
Infrastructure, equipment and hygiene	239	88.7
Self-checking system	236	91.1
Traceability	235	96.2
Labelling	251	84.1
Total	961	89.9

Measures following non-compliances

	Number of measures
Warnings	50
PVs (procès-verbal)	11
Seizures	3
Total	64

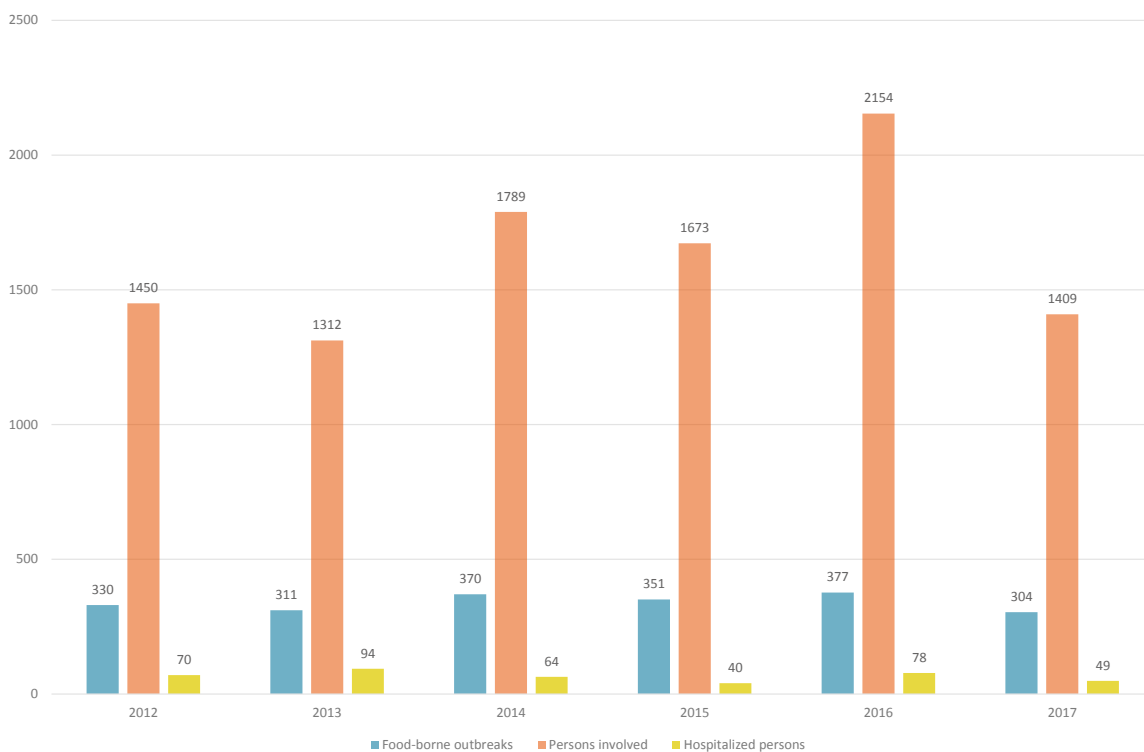
On the whole, the 2017 results are similar to the results in 2016.

3.7. Food-borne outbreaks

Food-borne outbreaks' is an umbrella term for infections or intoxications caused by the consumption of microbiologically contaminated food or water. These outbreaks are often caused by microbiological contaminations. 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.

In 2017, 304 food-borne outbreaks were reported: 1,409 people were involved, 49 of whom were hospitalized. In 2017, there were no deaths resulting from reported food-borne outbreaks. In only 2.6% of the food-borne outbreaks, there were strong indications that food was at the origin of the outbreak based on analyses of food leftovers or medical examinations of the patients.

Number of notified food-borne outbreaks



Pathogenic agent	Number of food-borne outbreaks	Number of diseases	Number of hospitalizations	Number of deaths	Strong causal link between the outbreak and food	Food product involved (in case of strong evidence)
Bacillus cereus	1	3	1	0		
Campylobacter	4	18	8	0		
Clostridium perfringens	2	182	0	0	2	Prepared meals containing pork Buffet meals
STEC	2	10	9	0	1	Meat preparations
Histamines	3	19	0	0	2	Fishery products
Norovirus	3	90	5	0	2	Mixed foodstuffs (in a meal)
Salmonella	2	14	9	0	1	Eggs
Unknown	287	1,073	17	0		
Total	304	1.409	49	0	8	-

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 causal link between a food-borne outbreak and a particular food product. 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



3.8. Import checks

Import checks: number of consignments (with % of refused consignments)

	2015	2016	2017
Live animals	13,361 (0.2%)	13,353 (0.2%)	3,509* (0.4%)
Foodstuffs of animal origin	24,681 (0.4%)	22,737 (0.6%)	22,100 (0.6%)
Plants and plant products	19,832 (1.0%)	16,764 (0.9%)	18,856 (0.6%)
Products not intended for human consumption	2,353 (0.6%)	2,425 (0.9%)	2,630 (0.9%)
Total	60,227 (0.6%)	55,279 (0.6%)	47,095 (0.6%)

*The number of consignments of fish and aquaculture animals has diminished significantly compared to the previous two years. There has been a slight increase in the number of imported animals.

Extensive official checks of foodstuffs and feed of non-animal origin at import

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

In 2017, 536 analyses were carried out on more than 4,287 consignments of imported vegetables, fruit (including garden herbs), spices, nuts, etc.; 26 consignments were refused due to non-compliant results: the presence of residues of pesticides (21), mycotoxins (2) and prohibited colourants (1).

Import checks of food and feed of non-animal origin in the framework of protective measures

When it appears that certain foodstuffs and feed of non-animal origin imported from certain third countries possibly pose a serious risk to the health of humans, animals or the environment and when it is impossible to sufficiently manage the risk, the European Commission may impose specific requirements by way of protective measures. The products concerned are presented for inspection at the Agency's border inspection post, after which they are always subjected to a document check (certificate, analysis report,...) and possible sampling for further analysis.

In 2017, 2,236 consignments of products were presented for import, 218 of which underwent sampling : 19 consignments were rejected, 10 of which due to non-compliant documents and 9 due to non-compliant analysis results. These protective measures are aimed at conducting checks on:

aflatoxins in nuts (peanuts, pistachios, hazelnuts), dried figs and pastes of these products, nutmeg and watermelon seeds from certain third countries (Ghana, India, Iran, China, Egypt, Nigeria, Turkey, Indonesia, Brazil and Argentina):

- 166 of the 1,730 consignments presented for import were sampled,
- 9 were rejected due to non-compliant analysis results;
- pentachlorophenol (PCP) in guar gum and derived products from India: 13 of the 237 consignments were sampled and found to be compliant;
- GMOs in rice and rice products from China: 4 out of 4 consignments were sampled and found to be compliant;
- radioactivity of foodstuffs from Japan due to the nuclear incident in Fukushima: 8 of the 135 consignments presented for import were sampled and found to be compliant;
- pesticide residues on okra from India.: 2 of the 5 consignments were sampled and found to be compliant;

3.9. Fraud control

In the context of fraud control with regard to the safety of the food chain, the National Investigation Unit of the FASFC (NOE/UNE) conducts investigations into 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, identification of horses, pesticides, veterinary medicines, 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 FASFC,
- the Food Fraud Working Group organized by DG Santé of the European Commission,
- the Working Group of Enforcement Officers (WGEO).

Fraud control

	2015	2016	2017
Fraud Investigations	522	562	442
Participation in roadside checks	18	59	64
Samplings in farms	58	98	85
Samplings in slaughterhouses	452	51	20
Specific actions	23	21	14
The transfer of information to other departments	113	85	124
Infringements	168	209	206

Checks of passengers' luggage at customs

In collaboration with Customs, the Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products (FAMHP) and the FPS Public Health and the FASFC conducted checks on passengers' luggage at Brussels Airport (Zaventem), and the airports of Brussels South Charleroi (Gosselies), Ostend and Bierseke. The checks pertained to compliance with the regulations regarding the import of meat, plants, animal products and plant products, animals -

protected animal and plant species included- in the framework of the CITES regulation (CITES: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

The checks also targeted the illegal import of cosmetics and medicines. This action is referred to as the "BACON" action (Bagage CONTrols).

In 2017, the FASFC, the FAMHP and the FPS Public Health seized products from 532 travellers (468 in 2015 and 663 in 2016) during 34 inspections (38 in 2015 and 38 in 2016):

	2015	2016	2017
Foodstuffs (meat, fish, dairy products, fruit, ...)	1,915 kg	2,156 kg	1,975 kg
Cosmetic products	1,670	972	1,507
Boxes of medicines	1,211	2,060	4,097

In the framework of the awareness creation campaign aimed at the prevention of rabies, checks on pets were carried out: 7 dogs and cats were checked in 2017, compared to 67 pets in 2015 and 313 in 2016 (227 of which during a 3-day special campaign). One animal was placed in quarantine due to the absence of blood test results for rabies.

3.10. Illegal use of fipronil

	Products	Number of samplings	Favourable samplings (%)
Follow-up of incidents involving animal products	Matériel d'échantillonnage	30	100
	Oeufs et ovoproduits	677	83.2
	Produits transformés	200	99.5
	Viande de volaille et préparations de viande de volaille	268	92,2
Follow-up of incidents involving plant products	Champignons	40	100
EU monitoring	Oeufs à couvrir	60	100
	Oeufs et ovoproduits	40	100
	Viande de volaille et préparations de viande de volaille	66	100
Total		1,381	90.2

Just before the summer of 2017, an egg processing plant discovered the presence of fipronil in eggs from a Belgian poultry farm. This discovery took everyone by surprise, since the use of fipronil in farms is prohibited by law. Moreover, fipronil had never been found in the poultry sector before. What at first seemed to be an isolated contamination (in a single laying hen farm, which was discovered in June 2017) turned into a full-blown incident in the poultry sector after weeks of thorough and complex investigations. Fipronil is a chemical substance that is used to fight insects in plants and pets (used in flea collars, among other things).

Notwithstanding these legal uses of fipronil, the substance is not authorized for use in food-producing animals.

Based on the results of the investigation, the contamination of the eggs and egg-based products did not have an impact on consumers' health. Only one batch of eggs had to be recalled due to health risks (long-term risks, only when eggs containing fipronil are consumed for many years).

Needless to say, chicken meat has never posed a health risk, since this meat comes from broiler chickens. Considering that red poultry mite aren't an issue in broiler chicken farms, there has been no misuse of fipronil in said farms.

In short, millions of eggs had to be destroyed because they contained traces of fipronil which exceeded the norm. Consequently, these eggs were non-compliant, although they did not pose a public health risk. Explaining this distinction to the consumers proved to be a complex task. The incident did, however, have major consequences for the food industry and the poultry sector in particular.

The European Commission assessed the Agency's response to the crisis in June 2018 and acknowledged the merits of our approach.

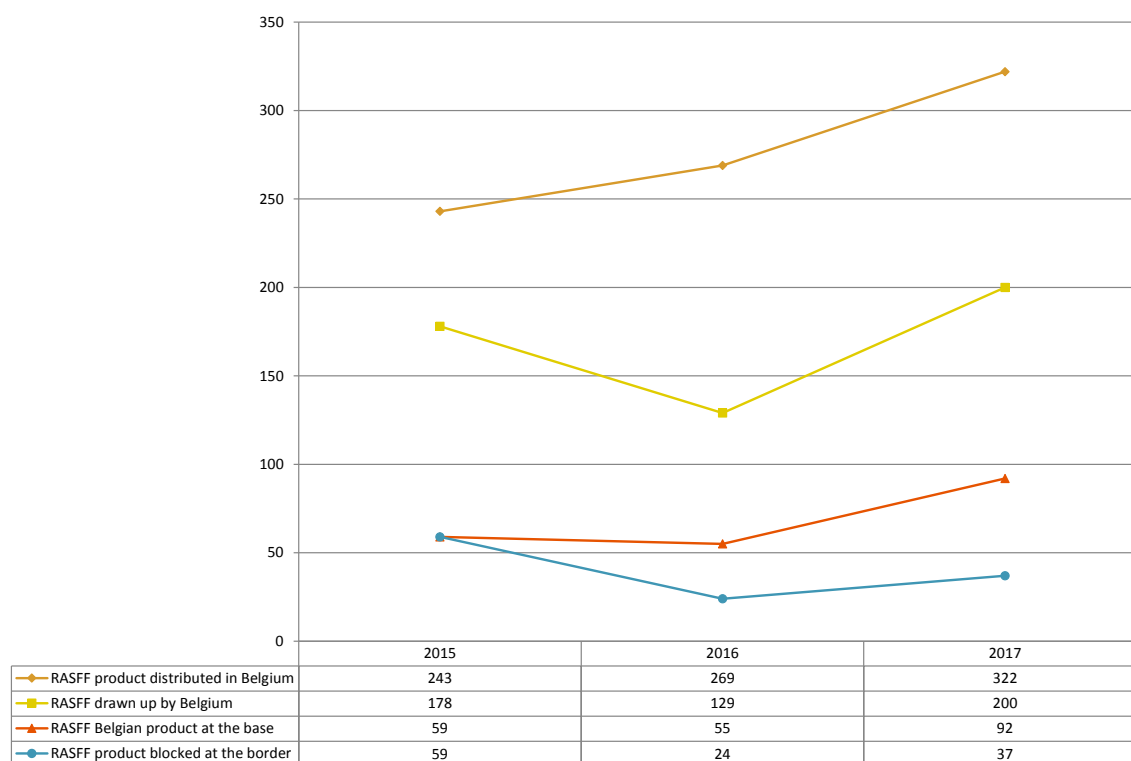
In addition, the FASFC has carried out inspections in all of the poultry farms concerned, which is unparalleled in Europe, and has actively contributed to setting up a compensation scheme for the affected poultry farms.

3.11. Notifications and consequences of checks

3.11.1. RASFF

In 2017, all EU member states combined made 3,764 notifications via the Rapid Alert System for Food & Feed (RASFF) concerning products that might pose a threat to the health of humans or animals and might affect other member states or third countries. Belgium made 200 of these notifications based on:

Import checks at the border (45), the establishments' self-checking system (80), official checks on the Belgian market (57), consumer complaints (4) or e-commerce (14).



The top 5 of Belgian RASFF-notifications in 2017 based on the hazard

Per hazard (%)	
Pathogenic micro-organisms	32.5
Mycotoxins	12.5
Residues of veterinary medicines	10.0
Industrial contaminants	6.0
Residues of pesticides	5.5

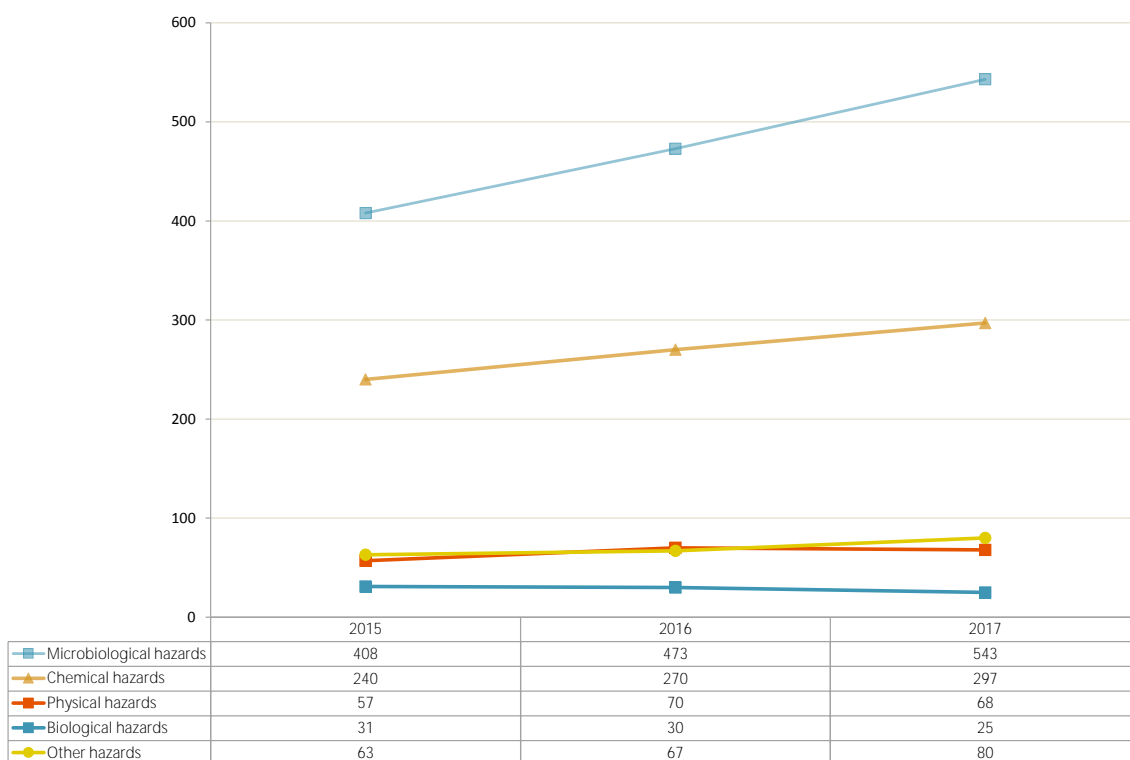
Top 5 of Belgian RASFF notifications in 2017 per product category

Per product category (%)	
Poultry meat (products)	15.5
Nuts and derived products	12.5
Meat (products) (other than poultry)	11.0
Feed	10.5
Food supplements etc.	7.5

3.11.2. Mandatory notification

Each operator carrying out activities that fall under the FASFC's responsibilities is required to inform the Agency whenever he or she suspects that a product

imported, produced, raised, grown, processed, manufactured or distributed may be detrimental to the health of humans, animals or plants.



The number of notifications increased by 11% compared to 2016.

3.11.3. Measures following non-compliances

Measures following non-compliances

	2015	2016	2017
Warnings	16,129	15,862	14,748
PVs (procès-verbal)	6,391	6,974	7,900
Seizures	1,521	1,555	1,878
Temporary closures	106	127	174
Procedures for suspension or withdrawal of an approval	46	35	76
Amount of administrative fines	€2,987,438	€3,451,225	€4,032,810





Food chain safety barometers

4

In order to obtain a general overview of food chain safety, the FASFC's Scientific Committee, in close cooperation 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 FASFC's inspection 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.

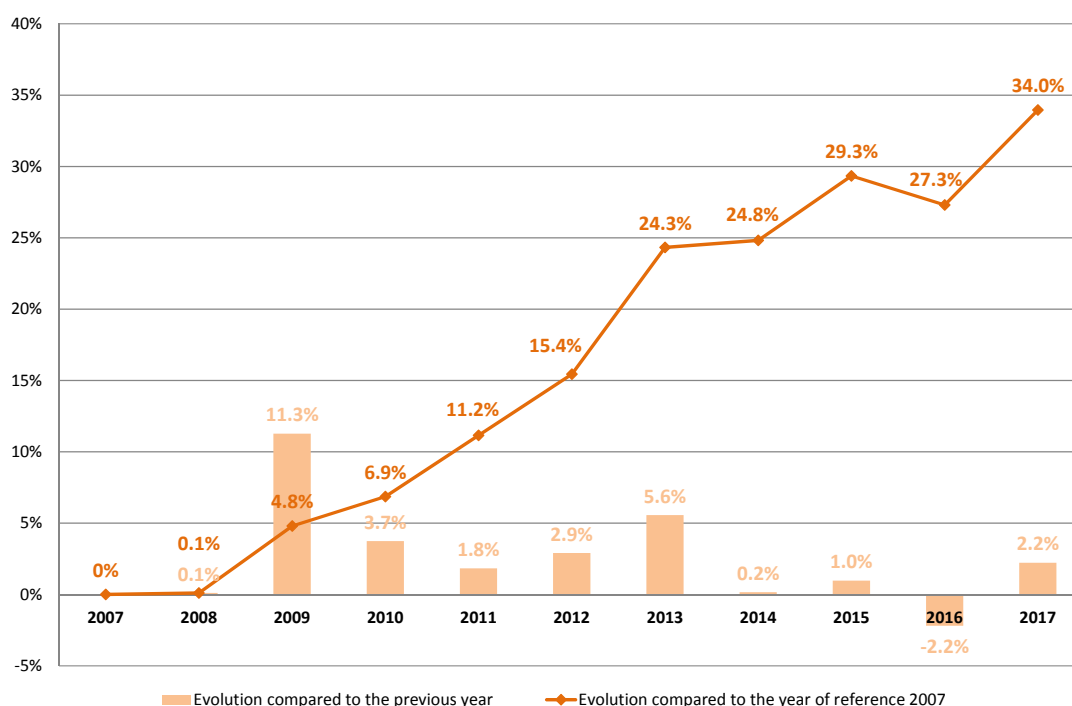
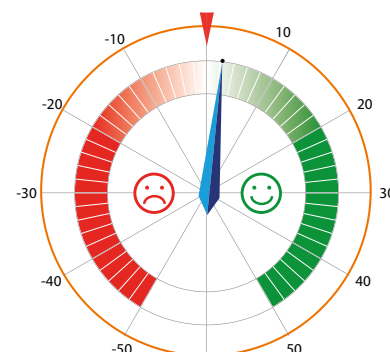


2016 | 2017

+ 2.2 %

4.1. Food safety barometer

Since the collection of food safety data started in 2007, the food safety barometer has shown a positive trend. This positive trend can be attributed mainly to an increase of the number of food business operators with a validated self-checking system and a decrease in the cases of salmonellosis in humans. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the number of food safety-related notifications. Each year, the product checks conducted by the FASFC reveal a high degree of compliance. Since these results barely change over the years, they only have a limited effect on the evolution of the food safety barometer.



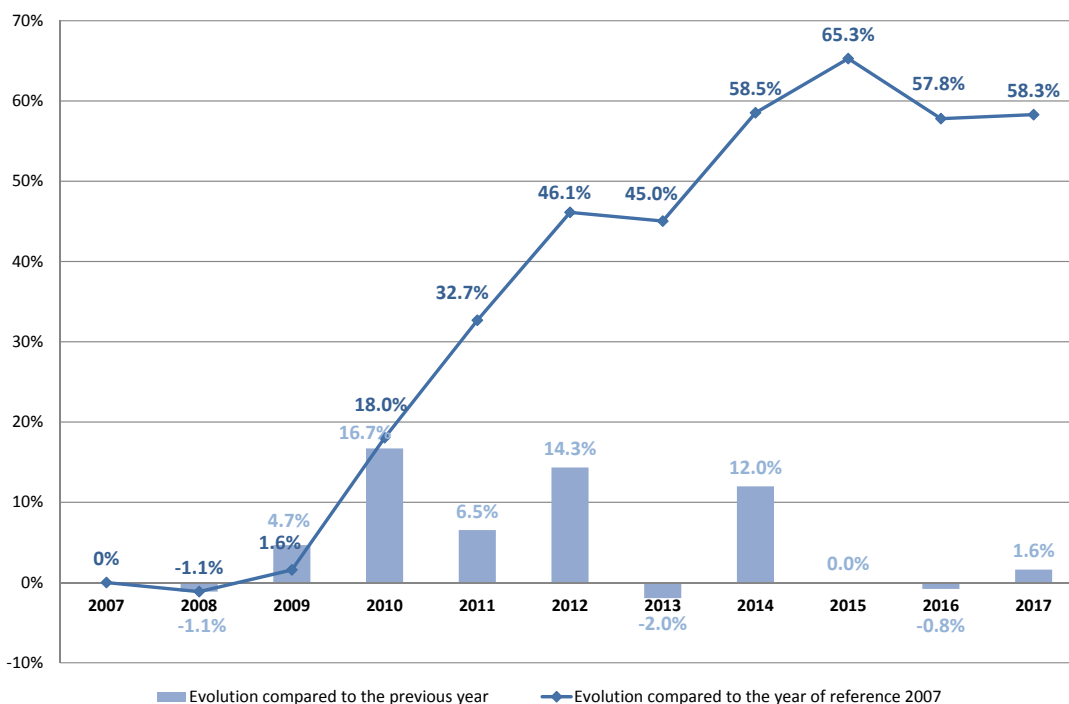
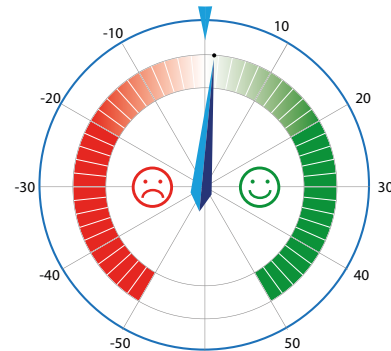
After a one-off negative evolution in 2016, the barometer once again indicates a positive evolution in 2017 (+2.2% compared to 2016). More precisely, in 2017 less people were involved in food-borne outbreaks (FSI 28) and less cases of Salmonella - (FSI 29) and Listeria contaminations (FSI 30) transmitted through food were reported.

However, there has been a considerable drop in the number of favourable inspections with regard to a well-functioning self-checking system (FSI 6) and with regard to infrastructure, equipment and hygiene in the distribution sector, the hotel and catering

industry and the institutional kitchen sector (FSI 7). However, it has to be noted in this respect that changes were made to the inspections with regard to self-checking and infrastructure, equipment and hygiene in the B2C sector (business-to-consumer), which could partly explain the less favourable results. Finally, more food safety notifications were registered (FSI 1), which can be interpreted as heightened vigilance on the part of the food business operators.

2016 | 2017

+ 1.6 %

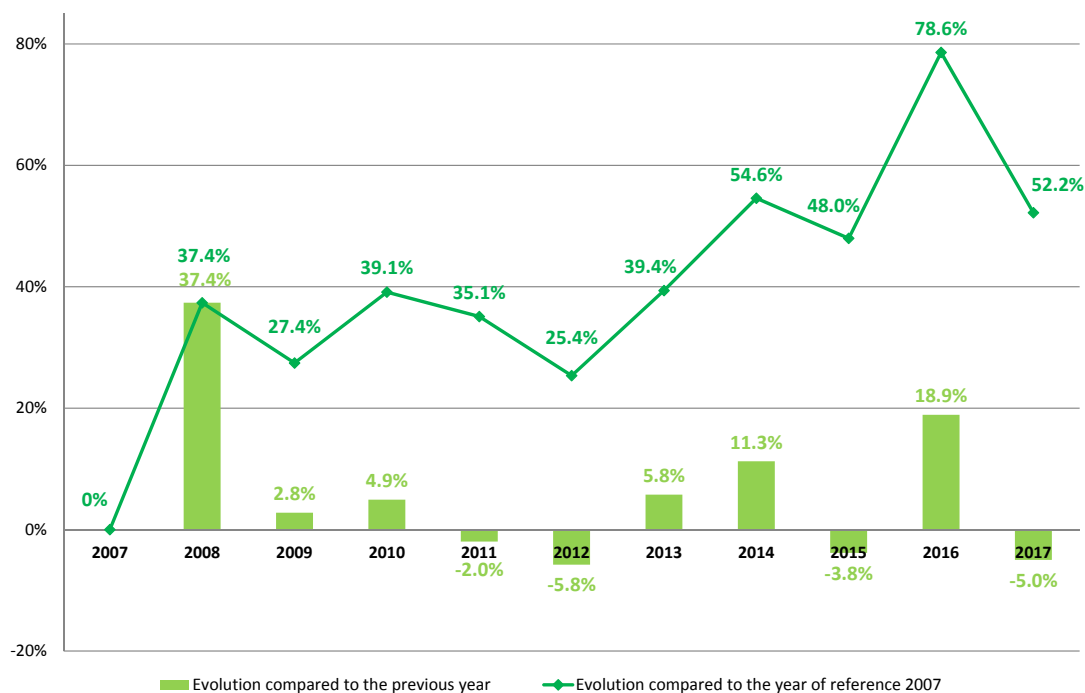
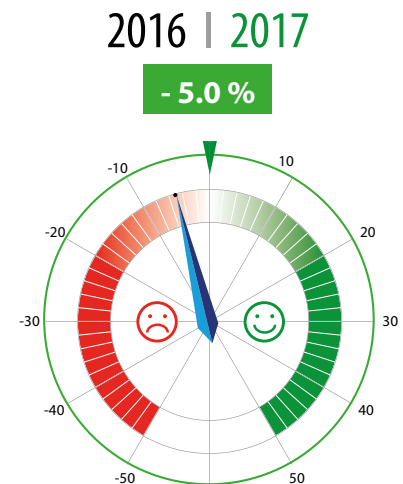


Compared to 2016, the animal health barometer shows a positive evolution (+1.6%). With regard to the individual indicators, a slight increase could be discerned in the notifications of the various notifiable animal diseases, which is indicative of an improved surveillance in the animal sector. In addition, there was less mortality in small ruminants and veal calves, an improvement of the cell count of cow's milk and a very slight improvement (decrease) in the antibiotics resistance of indicator germs.

A less favourable result is that the mortality of fattening pigs has increased for the fourth year in a row and that there has been a slight drop in the number of farms (primary animal production) with a validated self-checking system for the third year in a row. Furthermore, minor negative evolutions can be seen in the indicator that pertains to infrastructure, equipment and hygiene inspections on farms, the percentage of condemned poultry carcasses and the notification of abortions in cattle.

4.3. Plant health barometer

Compared to 2007, the plant health barometer shows a clearly positive trend. This trend can be explained primarily by the favourable evolution of the indicator pertaining to self-checking in the plant production sector.



Between 2016 and 2017, the plant health barometer indicated a decrease in plant health of 5.0%. The primary cause of this increase is the unfavourable evolution of the indicator regarding the notification of plant diseases and harmful organisms (which can be interpreted as the result of decreased vigilance). Simultaneously, a positive evolution can be observed in the indicator related to *Phytophthora ramorum* (sudden oak death) and the indicator related to phytosanitary checks at import and phytosanitary inspections (traceability).

As a reminder, the indicator related to checks on the corn rootworm (*Diabrotica virgifera* Le Conte) and the indicator regarding phytosanitary inspections (physical checks) are also no longer taken into consideration in calculating the barometer (since 2015 and 2016 respectively).



2017

Facts and Figures

Safe food day after day: our job!



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