

National Food Crime Unit

The National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) is a law enforcement capability within the FSA.

Consumers should have confidence that their food is safe and what it says it is.

The National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) is a dedicated law enforcement function of the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The unit provides leadership on food crime across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The unit works closely with the Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit within [Food Standards Scotland](#).

The NFCU was established in 2015 following a review of the 2013 horse meat incident. The NFCU is tasked with protecting consumers and the food industry from food crime within food supply chains.

We define [food crime](#) as serious fraud and related criminality in food supply chains. This definition also includes activity impacting on drink and animal feed. The NFCU response is determined by assessing the gravity of the fraud. This will include considerations of the degree of planning and co-ordination in committing it, the impact of the fraud across geographical regions and boundaries, and the financial loss and other harm to the public and industry.

Examples of food crime include the use of stolen food in the supply chain, unlawful slaughter, diversion of unsafe food, adulteration, substitution or misrepresentation of food, and document fraud.

Tips

The NFCU has developed a [food fraud resilience self-assessment tool](#) to support businesses in developing and implementing their counter-fraud strategy.

The self-assessment tool covers different areas that businesses will need to be aware of so that they can better identify and address process issues.

National Food Crime Unit objectives

The strategic objectives of the NFCU are to:

- Prevent food being rendered unsafe or inauthentic through dishonesty
- Disrupt offending and bring offenders to justice
- Build global and domestic counter food crime capability

The NFCU plays an important role in multi-sector engagement at national and international levels. It works closely with the food industry to ensure that businesses are well-informed and prepared to counter food crime. The Unit aims to create a hostile environment for those engaging in food crime by investigating suspected offenders or otherwise supporting partners in their lawful efforts to similarly disrupt those criminals.

National Food Crime Unit responses

The development and analysis of intelligence and information from a range of sources enables the Unit to prepare detailed strategic assessments that will identify threats, risks and vulnerabilities.

The unit works with industry to raise their awareness and test their response systems to food crime develops their resilience to the benefit of the food business and the public.

Control Strategy

The NFCU Control Strategy outlines the Unit's current food crime priorities, on which we focus our efforts to prevent food crime, deter and disrupt food criminals and bring offenders to justice.

Following a review in early 2023, we will focus on the following priority areas until March 2024:

- criminality in the red meat sector with a focus on beef, pork and lamb supply chains
- fraudulent activity within the chicken sector
- the diversion of meat and poultry animal by-products (ABP) back into the food and feed chain
- the entry of illegally harvested or misrepresented shellfish into the human food chain
- dangerous non-foods sold for consumption to UK consumers
- sustainable products and claims

We will continue to focus on the following cross-cutting themes where they intersect with our priority areas:

- food service
- illicit servicing of community demand
- brokers, traders, and agents

Reporting food crime

Members of the public and those working in the food and drink sector can speak up about food crime through [Food Crime Confidential](#).

Anyone with suspicions of food crime can report it safely and confidentially to the NFCU. You can [report a food crime online](#) or by freephone on **0800 028 1180**. For non UK mobiles or calls from overseas please use **0207 276 8787**.