

FSA shares update on tackling food crime from the Food Fraud Working Group

The [stakeholder message outlines proposals](#) to strengthen the collective response to food crime:

- launching a new freephone number for the food fraud hotline to make it easier for people to speak up and share their concerns;
- working with industry on ways to encourage food fraud whistleblowing ;
- strengthening information sharing arrangements between the third-party auditors used by food businesses, and the FSA, to help prevent criminal activity;
- improving how the FSA issues intelligence-based alerts to better warn food businesses about potential food fraud in supply chains.

People are often unaware that they are a victim of food fraud, but food crime can be seriously harmful to consumers, food businesses and the wider food industry. It can involve selling food or drink that isn't what it says it is, or that includes cheaper ingredients than the ones listed on the label. This activity places a heavy burden on businesses and local authorities, as well as the criminal justice system.

The Food Standards Agency has also, today, published two research reports, one estimating food crime costs the UK economy up to £2 billion a year and another which makes recommendations on food crime prevention. [‘The Cost of Food Crime’ research](#) has found the cost of food fraud to consumers, businesses and government is between £410 million and £1.96 billion per year.

Also published today is a report called [‘What works to prevent food fraud’](#) which highlights ways to complement our existing food fraud prevention work and strengthen lines of defence against fraudsters.

Emily Miles, CEO of the FSA said:

“The UK has some of the safest and most authentic food in the world, but there will always be a threat of criminality in the food system.

Food businesses are the first and most important line of defence and we want to support them. This is one of the reasons why we launched a working group to explore together whether some areas of our collective response to food crime can be improved. Together, we're making it easier to share intelligence and information by helping people who work in the food system to share their concerns with us freely and confidentially.

Our research suggests that for businesses and consumers feeling the financial strain, the cost of food crime still matters.”

Helen Sisson, Director and Co-Chair of the Food Industry Intelligence Network said:

"We are pleased to be taking action with the FSA and our partners in the food industry to strengthen the way we can prevent food crime in our supply chains. Cooperation and communication between every part of the food system is vital to protect the public and the global reputation of UK food."

If you suspect food fraud, report it to Food Crime Confidential always available on [food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk) or by phoning [0800 028 1180](tel:08000281180) (0207 276 8787 for non-UK mobiles and calls).

Case study 1: NFCU partnership working with West Northamptonshire Council

The NFCU, working with West Northamptonshire Council worked on a council led operation which resulted in several tons of food being destroyed. After sharing intelligence and supporting West Northamptonshire Council the NFCU accompanied the local authority on an unannounced visit which identified a food business operating from a site without approval and without appropriate food safety management in place. This led to the detention and subsequent destruction of the food and the closure of the unapproved activity.

Case study 2: NFCU partnership working with Wiltshire Council

The NFCU worked with Wiltshire Council in a local authority led operation. The team raided car washes on in Devizes and in Ludgershall in 2020 after a tip off about illegal meat cutting plants. The serious hygiene breaches led to an emergency closures of the locations and we issued a national food alert, to warn that meat that had been supplied was unfit for consumption. About 5.1 tonnes of beef and lamb, with an estimated value of £35,700, was confiscated and later destroyed. In court, it was estimated during the period from January to November 2020 the defendant profited £150,000 from meat trading.