

## FSA publishes results of latest Retail Surveillance Survey and revised industry guidance on caffeine supplements

The Retail Surveillance Sampling programme is targeted at areas of known or potential risk. The survey took place from June to December 2024 and sampled 822 products in total, including those that may be found in a typical basket of food, along with a range of other products.

Food samples were bought from national supermarkets and smaller independent retailers, with some samples bought online. The samples were tested for undeclared allergens, contaminants, adulteration, inaccurate composition or incorrect labelling.

While most food tested as part of this targeted sampling programme was safe and authentic, the project highlighted some concerns to be investigated further:

- 83% of the samples of caffeine supplements had unsatisfactory results. The unsatisfactory results related to caffeine content not reflecting that on the label (some had less than stated, some more) and other labelling issues.
- 74% of the samples of bread had unsatisfactory results. Of these, 69% were purchased from small retailers. The majority of the unsatisfactory bread results related to minor labelling issues; however, three samples (out of 35 samples) indicated the presence of undeclared allergens.
- 59% of the bubble tea samples were unsatisfactory. All but one of the unsatisfactory samples had multiple minor labelling issues, most commonly related to nutritional information and the format of the date on the label. 42% of the unsatisfactory samples also had issues related to undeclared and excess use of additives.

The FSA alerted Local Authorities (LAs) about the unsatisfactory results so that they could take appropriate action.

The samples of bubble tea were found to have several non-compliance issues, including the unauthorised use of certain additives and levels exceeding those permitted in the UK. The FSA informed LAs about these issues, particularly concerning bubble tea products from the far east that contained Konjac (E425). Although Konjac is an approved additive, its use in bubble tea is not authorised due to the potential choking hazard it poses. Where LAs found these non-compliances, they were asked to take appropriate enforcement action, including product withdrawals.

In response to the results, the FSA, in collaboration with FSS and DHSC, has taken steps to address the [potential safety risks linked to caffeine in supplements and has published revised industry advice](#). The revised advice will further protect consumers and raise awareness of the risks associated with overconsumption of food supplements containing caffeine, including pure caffeine powders.

“People have a right to trust the food they buy and we are pleased that the majority of samples tested for allergen compliance, authenticity and composition met regulations.

While major safety or authenticity issues are relatively rare, we urge businesses to pay greater attention to the accuracy of labelling, especially for allergens. All businesses have a responsibility to provide food that is safe and meets our high standards. Where areas of non-compliance were found this year, we’ve acted to address them by alerting the relevant Local Authorities so they can take appropriate action.??

These findings come from a targeted survey – focusing on areas where we already suspect potential non-compliance and consumers should remain reassured they are not reflective of wider food safety and standards in the UK.?

Following the results of the survey, our revision to the industry guidance on caffeine supplements across the UK demonstrates how the FSA uses intelligence to inform policy decisions. Consumer safety is our highest priority and using evidence-based initiatives, like the retail surveillance survey, allows us to ensure we can take informed steps to protect public health.”?

Rebecca Sudworth, Director of Policy at the FSA

The programme was delivered in partnership by the three Local Authority Official Food and Feed Laboratories (OLs) and two private OLs in England and Wales. The [full report](#) is available in the research section of our website.?

We continue to work with industry and local authorities to ensure food is safe and what it says it is. If we identify unsafe food on the market, we will work with the relevant authorities to respond and take rapid action to alert consumers. Go to [food.gov.uk](https://www.food.gov.uk) to sign up for these alerts.