

Radioactivity in Food and the Environment (RIFE) report 2020

Area of research interest: Radioactivity in Food and the Environment

Project status: Completed

Conducted by: Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science

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This report covers sampling and analysis carried out in 2020 as part of the radiological monitoring programme. The main purpose of the programme is to make sure that discharges from the UK nuclear sites do not cause unacceptable exposure to radioactivity through our food. It is [available to view online](#).

Key findings

The key findings of the RIFE report 2020 are:

- the total radiation dose to members of the public in the UK is significantly below the annual dose limit of 1 millisievert for all exposures
- the exposure of consumers to radioactivity in 2020 was similar than in 2019 for the majority of nuclear sites.

Where the results come from

The report combines our monitoring results with those of the Environment Agency, Natural Resources Wales the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Food Standards Scotland. It brings together our data on food from habits surveys and data on environmental sources of radioactivity to provide a comprehensive picture for people who live close to nuclear sites and eat locally produced food.

Habits surveys

Habits surveys are conducted to establish the habits of people living and working near nuclear sites in the United Kingdom. This includes the food they eat and the activities they carry out in the area around nuclear sites. The information from the surveys and data on the levels of radioactivity found in food and the environment are used to calculate the level of radiation they are exposed to.

In 2020, one habits survey was carried out at Sellafield in England and conducted in line with Covid-19 restrictions. The results were used to improve the assessment of doses to the members of the public near nuclear licensed sites.

Covid-19 Pandemic

During 2020, the UK was in lockdown for a number of months which had a direct impact on our radiological survey work, during the lockdown periods we were still able to collect a number of samples and for these to be analysed under the UK governments Covid guidance.

As the lockdowns eased this made it easier to be able to collect and analyse data, as well as conducting interview but still adhering to government Covid legislation.

RIFE Survey

As well as the publication of RIFE 26, we are also inviting members of the public to take part in a survey looking at how best to take RIFE forward. There are a maximum of 25 questions and the survey should take about 20 minutes to complete. You can [take part online](#).

FSA Explains

Radioactivity

Radioactivity has been around since the Earth formed. It exists naturally in the atmosphere, soil, seas and rivers. It is also created by human activity during energy production and military operations.

Very small amounts of radioactivity get into our food and drink. The vast majority of radioactivity found in food results from natural rather than man-made sources.