

Food crime

Understanding food crime and how to report it.

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

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. It can be seriously harmful to consumers, food businesses and the wider food industry.

The Food Standard Agency's [National Food Crime Unit](#) (NFCU) works to prevent, detect and investigate food crime across the UK.

Types of food crime

The National Food Crime Unit focuses its work on seven types of food crime:

1. **illegal processing** - slaughtering or preparing meat and related products in unapproved premises or using unauthorised techniques
2. **misrepresentation** - marketing or labelling a product to wrongly portray its quality, safety, origin or freshness
3. **waste diversion** - illegally diverting food, drink or feed meant for disposal, back into the supply chain
4. **substitution** - replacing a food or ingredient with another substance that is similar but inferior
5. **document fraud** - making, using or possessing false documents with the intent to sell or market a fraudulent or substandard product
6. **theft** - dishonestly obtaining food, drink or feed products to profit from their use or sale
7. **adulteration** - including a foreign substance which is not on the product's label to lower costs or fake a higher quality

Preventing food crime

Food crime can occur in various ways. It can range from isolated acts of dishonesty by individual offenders to organised illegal activity co-ordinated by criminal networks.

Food crime can be reduced by denying offenders the means to commit offences, or by reducing the likelihood of individuals and groups becoming offenders in the first place.

The NFCU works with the food industry to ensure that businesses are well-informed of food crime risks and are capable of implementing measures to protect themselves from food crime.

Ensuring the food production, food manufacturing and retail sectors are hostile environments to individuals or groups intent on offending is key to preventing food crime.

Food Fraud Resilience Self-Assessment tool

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.

The tool can be completed anonymously and should take no more than 15 minutes to use. If you have further questions for the NFCU Prevention Team, or would like support in building your business's fraud resilience, provide your email address at the end of the tool or contact us directly at NFCU.Prevention@food.gov.uk.

Food Crime Strategic Assessment 2020

The FSA's National Food Crime Unit and Food Standards Scotland's Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit (SFCIU) have produced an assessment of food crime threats to the UK.

The Food Crime Strategic Assessment examines areas of the food supply chain which may be vulnerable to food crime, as well identifying emerging threats which need to be addressed.

PDF

[View Food Crime Strategic Assessment 2020 as PDF](#)([Open in a new window](#)) (2.46 MB)

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](#).

Instances of poor food hygiene are of concern to the Food Standards Agency, but are not defined as food crime. Hygiene concerns should be [reported to the local authority](#), not the NFCU, if there is no direct intention to deceive.

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**.