



Risk Newsletter

Food Forensics

January 2025



HIGHLIGHTS

- Disruption between Ireland and GB as Holyhead remains shut after storm Darragh damage
- Illegal pork imports coming into the UK from Romania - an African swine fever area
- Multiple UK areas under now under an Avian Influenza housing order as AI spreads
- Cocoa continues to be a concern as yields are low for the third year running. Demand is out-stripping supply and prices are reflecting this
- Beef prices are increasing
- Concern over imports of continental meats as African swine fever continues
- Coconut supply a concern at present with supplier challenges

Produce

Citrus

Persimmon production in the Valencian Community has halved, with only 150 million kilos harvested compared to an expected 300 million kilos. The Ribera del Júcar region has been particularly affected. Water scarcity has significantly impacted yields with the Dana weather event causing further damage. Inadequate road conditions have hindered access to crops. High-quality fruit has somewhat mitigated financial losses.

The Sichuan Anyue lemon harvest in China is concluding early this year due to a citrus off-year and drought-induced production declines, leading to a 10% drop in output compared to last year and a 40% decrease from peak levels. Reduced supply has caused prices to rise significantly, with high-quality lemons now fetching yen 5.2/kg - nearly 50% higher than in previous years. The price surge is partly attributed to last year's low prices, which caused losses for traders, and pre-emptive inventory purchases.

Top Fruit

The organic apple harvest in Germany's Altes Land region faced significant challenges this year, with overall yields down by 30% due to early flowering and adverse weather. Varietal disparities were evident, with Wellant suffering up to 80% losses and Jonagold experiencing a 45% decline, raising concerns about late-season availability and potential risks

of market substitution with non-organic or falsely labelled products. In contrast, varieties like Elstar and Braeburn fared better, maintaining moderate yields.

Soft Fruit

The rapid expansion of the blueberry industry in China poses significant challenges to global markets, particularly for southern hemisphere exporters like Peru and Chile. China's ability to produce blueberries in various geographic and climatic conditions enables them to lengthen the season, potentially affecting exports from other regions. As Chinese production grows, with increasing demand for fresh, locally grown fruit, it threatens to reduce the market opportunities for foreign exporters, who now face stiff competition.

The U.S. strawberry market is facing significant challenges due to reduced supply from key production areas. California's strawberry harvest has been hindered by recent rains, particularly in regions like Salinas-Watsonville, Santa Maria, and Oxnard. These weather disruptions have caused a slowdown in production, further tightening supply. Similarly, Florida's production has been delayed due to Hurricanes Milton and Helene, which damaged crops and forced late planting. The low production out of California and Florida sees demand exceeding supply and prices increasing.

Stone Fruit

The Tasmanian cherry harvest is looking good with forecast yields up 15%

compared to last year.

Grapes

North America's table grape supply remains constrained, with tight open market availability expected to last until the end of January. Grapes are being sourced from Peru, Brazil, South Africa, and Northern Chile, with varieties like Sweet Globes, Timpson, Ivory, and Autumn Crisp (green grapes) and Allison, Sweet Celebration, and Timco (red grapes) seeing strong demand. Speciality grapes, including Cotton Candy and Candy Snap, also remain popular. Demand for grapes is high, a new TikTok "grapes under the table" phenomenon has the potential to drive demand even higher. Challenges for Canadian shippers include unfavourable exchange rates, potential port strikes, and container shortages in source countries, all complicating supply logistics.

Continuous rain and climatic fluctuations have severely impacted the cultivation of Muscat Hamburg grapes (panneer thiratchai) in Theni, India, a GI-tagged variety prized for its sweetness and year-round availability. Farmers report a significant decline in yield, from six tonnes per acre to just one, due to poor pollination and fungal infections like downy mildew, powdery mildew, and grey mould.

Avocado

Demand is strong for avocados but supply is light in the USA. Fruit out of Mexico is on the small side limiting supply of larger calibre fruits. Fruit is also coming



from Colombia but supply is not strong. Availability and sizes are expected to improve as the season progresses.

The avocado market in Europe has been relatively stable, with prices slightly higher than last year. However, the increased production of avocados from particularly Morocco, Israel, and Spain, raises concerns about the authenticity of some products. With the rise in European-origin avocados and a shift away from imports from Mexico, there is a risk of mislabelling or misrepresenting the origins of avocados.

Exotics

South Africa's litchi crop is significantly reduced due to low fruit set, cold weather, and sunburn damage, causing a severe supply shortage and soaring prices during the summer season. Some farms report only 20% of normal crop yields, with overall volumes estimated to be 50% lower than December 2023.

Papaya supply is low, driven by hot and dry weather in Mexico and Guatemala. There are also labour availability challenges combined with reduced plantings. Prices are increasing as a result.

Salad Crops

Cold weather in Morocco slows pepper production by up to 40% in some cases. Prices are likely to increase as demand increases in January if supply is still slow.

Mushrooms

A fire at Monterey Mushrooms in Morgan Hill, one of North America's largest mushroom producers, destroyed half of a 2,000-square-foot warehouse. While fire-fighters salvaged the remaining portion, the cause remains unknown. As a major supplier, Monterey Mushrooms plays a pivotal role in the market, particularly for portabella mushrooms.

Ginger & Garlic

The garlic supply chain faces challenges with reduced stock movement and supply deficits from major producers like China and Spain, driving up prices and making quality a critical market factor. South American countries, including Peru, Argentina, and Chile, provide alternative supply, while Europe sees varied demand; countries like Germany report below-average consumption. Italy relies on imports, and the Netherlands faces high-priced Chinese garlic. France experiences robust garlic demand despite limited stock. In North America, Argentina is expected to fill supply gaps, while South Africa

struggles with price pressures due to high local and international volumes.

Garlic supply in North America faces challenges, with distinct markets for non-Chinese garlic and Chinese imports. Non-Asian garlic, including Mexican and Spanish varieties, is limited, with Spain offering mixed quality and high prices. Argentina is poised to ship soon, but Peru's output fell short due to increased local consumption. California garlic is available but expensive, while Chinese garlic faces high prices driven by freight costs, port delays, and global supply shortages.

The Spanish garlic industry faces challenges with shrinking cultivation areas and limited stock, raising concerns about authenticity and supply chain transparency. Over the past two years, the garlic-growing acreage in Spain has decreased by more than 30%, with purple garlic experiencing the sharpest decline, now below 40% of total cultivation.

Coconut

There are concerns over coconut supplies in the coming months. The delisting of a large Indonesian coconut manufacturer from a UK retailers supplier list after it failed to make the necessary investments has other market players concerned it will not meet other customer requirements. In addition, a large Philippine company responsible for 15% of desiccated coconut production will have to cease production due to financial difficulties. Desiccated coconut supply may therefore be tight.

Spices

Black pepper supplies tight following poor weather with some of the lowest levels for 6-8 years. Demand remains high from the US, EU, Asian and Middle Eastern markets resulting in price increases. Drought in Vietnam is likely to result in a delay to the pepper harvest of about 2 months.

India's cumin production is estimated to decline 10% with production in Rajasthan's cumin cultivation potentially dropping by 10-15%.

Nuts

Pecans, a widely consumed nut in the U.S., face significant supply challenges following Hurricane Helene. Georgia, the top pecan-producing state, experienced a 36 million-pound crop loss - 75% of its expected yield across 48,000 acres of orchards. Prices are projected to rise this holiday season, with pecan halves reaching \$7-8 per pound. The storm's long-term damage to productive trees

compounds the issue, and while USDA anticipates a 24% drop in per capita consumption, production is still unlikely to meet demand. Georgia produces about 33% of US pecans.

Across the rest of the United States: Poor yields due to drought and insufficient irrigation have led to light supplies across pecan-producing states. This has resulted in smaller and less developed nuts, with harvesting complications persisting into January.

In Mexico, drought-stricken reservoirs and dams limit water availability for trees, threatening the quality and output of the next crop unless substantial rainfall occurs between June and September.

Cereals

Russia is facing a severe agricultural crisis due to unprecedented winter crop failures, with 38% of winter crops classified as poor or unsprouted. This marks the smallest area of healthy crops before winter in 23 years, with droughts during the summer and autumn playing a critical role. Key regions like the Central Federal District report up to two-thirds of crops failing, while other areas like the Southern Federal District and Volga region also face significant losses.

Winter cereals in the UK are rating lower than expected with 57% of winter barley, 52% of winter oats and 45% of winter wheat rated in good/excellent condition.

Rapeseed

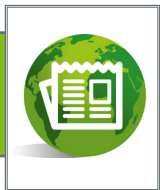
Australian rapeseed production is estimated to be down 8% due to a lower planted area and lower yields.

Coffee

Global coffee prices have surged, with Arabica beans reaching \$3.44 per pound, an 80% increase this year, and Robusta prices hitting record highs. This rise is attributed to severe weather impacting the world's largest producers, Brazil and Vietnam, and increasing global coffee consumption. Low inventories among producers and roasters exacerbate the situation, fuelling fears of prolonged price hikes.

Cocoa

Crop failure in West African countries has resulted in cocoa futures prices reaching all-time highs. This is the third year with supply issues due to weather. This situation generates a very real risk for chocolate makers and consumers as short supply and high prices coincide with high



demand. The US cocoa inventories are low, crop diseases are also adding to the challenge. Cocoa trees take years to begin to produce resulting in a long-term risk for cocoa.

Cadmium above the allowed maximum level in cocoa from Colombia.

Tea

Currently there is a shortage of tencha - the leaves used to produce matcha - in Japan. High demand has depleted stocks.

Wine

There is a shortage of Cava sparkling wine as a result of drought induced low grape yields. Sales in many areas are being rationed.

Honey

New Requirements for Exporting Honey and Apiculture Products to the EU. Effective immediately, establishments in non-EU countries exporting honey and other apiculture products for human consumption to the EU must be officially listed. Products will only be permitted entry into the EU if they originate from, are processed in, or are prepared at establishments included in lists maintained under Article 127(3) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625.

Rapeseed Oil

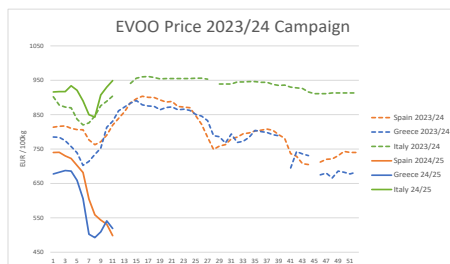
Canola oilseed prices have surged by 20% since March in Australia and Europe, driven by limited supply and rising vegetable oil markets. Prices recently reached two-year highs of around \$586 per tonne in Australia and \$580 per tonne in Europe. The tightening supply and strong demand raise concerns about authenticity and potential fraud in the canola market as stakeholders seek alternatives. Supply constraints are exacerbated by smaller harvests in major producers, including Canada, Ukraine, and Australia, while the EU and China have significantly increased imports. China's record canola imports, nearly tripling year-on-year, further strain global stocks. With production this year expected to hit multi-year lows, some regions may face pressures to misrepresent cheaper alternatives like soybean oil as canola oil.

Olives & Olive Oils

A labour shortage is causing issues with the Spanish olive harvest. 15% of fruits destined for table olive production remains unharvested due to a lack of workers.

Hotter and dry weather in Greece has delayed the olive harvest in the hope of more oil accumulation. Currently the estimates suggest a 50% reduction in

production.



Italian prices continue to strengthen while Greek and Spanish prices have significantly reduced.

Protein

African Swine Fever (ASF)

Albania has reported a recurrence of ASF, ongoing outbreaks continue in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Hungary, Italy, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine. Hong Kong has also reported a recurrence of the disease.

Avian Influenza

Following a number of findings of highly pathogenic avian influenza in wild birds and detections in poultry in the East Riding of Yorkshire and Norfolk, mandatory housing order has come into force in the East Riding of Yorkshire, City of Kingston upon Hull, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk to mitigate the risk of further outbreaks of disease occurring. While the outbreak has missed the peak turkey season there are still concerns over its potential impact on duck production both in the UK and in Europe.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has mandated dairy farms to provide samples of unpasteurised milk for testing to monitor the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1). This measure addresses concerns after the virus began appearing in dairy herds in March, despite prior containment efforts in poultry flocks. While pasteurised dairy products remain safe, public health officials warn against consuming unpasteurised milk due to potential contamination risks. The new testing strategy, initially implemented in six states, aims to safeguard public health and bolster confidence in the dairy industry. The USDA and FDA continue to work collaboratively on milk and dairy testing to ensure the authenticity and safety of the food supply. The bird flu outbreak has affected 720 dairy herds across 15 states, with California being the most impacted, also reporting the majority of human H5N1 cases.

Biosecurity New Zealand has imposed strict movement controls on a Mainland Poultry free-range egg farm in Otago following the detection of a high-pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H7N6 strain. This marks the first documented case of H7N6 in New Zealand, believed to result from a "spillover event" where wild waterfowl transmitted a low-pathogenic strain to chickens, which mutated into HPAI.

Blue-tongue virus (BTV-3)

Restricted Zones and infective areas continue to the East of the UK. General licences remaining in place for movement of animals from within a Restricted Zone to another premises including abattoirs, outside the restricted zone.

Dairy

Rabobank are forecasting a 0.8% global gain in 2025. Dairy farmers are expected to vaccinate against bluetongue in 2025 which should lessen the disease impact.

Beef

Beef prices continue to increase, the June survey in the UK showed the UK cattle population fell further year on year. Declines in the markets are contributing to the increase in prices seen. The Northern Ireland cattle herd was stable however, a high autumn kill may lead to a different picture.

Lamb & Goat

The lamb flock was down 2.5% on the same time in 2023, the most significant decline in breeding ewes registered for first time breeding. The lower flock number and lower lambing rates as a result of disease and weather in the Spring has impacted lamb availability. As a result it is likely the 2025 lamb crop may be down even further.

Chicken

Broiler placements were up 2% in the USA compared to the same period last year. US and EU prices are similar but Brazilian prices remain at a significant discount. UK commercial broiler placements have increased in 2024.

Egg Layer

US wholesale egg prices have increased in the run up to Christmas as outbreaks of avian influenza reduced supplies at the same time demand for baking increased. Prices have risen dramatically, particularly in California where caged egg production is prohibited. The USDA has lowered its egg forecast and strengthened the price



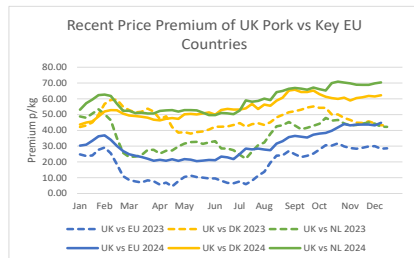
outlook.

The Dutch government scheme to reduce nitrogen emissions in and adjacent to special nature reserves has resulted in 220 poultry farms registering for the National Termination Scheme for Livestock Farming Locations, paying up to 120% of the capital value of the business. Estimates suggest the layer population may reduce by 10%.

Pig Meat

Last Chance for Animals, a US based NGO has released undercover footage it claims was filmed on three Prosciutto di Palma supplier farms. The footage shows conditions it claims would cause animal suffering. This comes on the back of challenges in Italy as it continues to battle ASF which is now starting to impact exports of its continental meats.

England accounts for 78% of the UK's total pig population with Northern Ireland 15% and Scotland 7%. Scotland has seen the largest reduction in total pigs with an almost 10% reduction in breeding pig numbers. Price differentials between the UK and key EU import countries continues to grow with some of the largest premiums seen this year. It is likely retailers and food service will move to capitalise on cheaper imports into the new year.



Cod, Haddock & white fish

Atlantic cod prices have rocketed and with a further reduction of 25% in supply from the Barent Sea, following a 20% cut in 2024, the processing sector is in crisis. Prices for frozen headed and gutted Norwegian and Russian cod for delivery into China have also hit record levels.

Fishmeal, Fishoil

Fishmeal prices have reduced considerably from last years peaks following the disruption to the Peruvian anchovy harvest. Good catches this year and oversupply of fishmeal from China has resulted in prices coming back. Fish oil yields from the Peruvian catches have remained low, price reductions have therefore lagged the reductions seen in fishmeal.

Animal Food

Pet-food RASFF Alerts & Recalls

Ultra Premium Direct recalls Protein boost Chicken Croquettes dog food due to possible presence of Salmonella.

FDA issued warning letter to Mid America Pet Food LLC due to violations leading to Salmonella contamination of its pet food products.

High copper content in complete feed for cats from Italy.

Salmonella in dry cat food from France.

Unauthorised substance (CBD) in petfood (oils and snacks for dogs, cats and horses) from the UK.

Salmonella and Enterobacteriaceae detected in a consignment of dog chews from Turkey.

Blue Ridge Beef is recalling their 2 lb log Puppy Mix due to Salmonella.

Northwest Naturals has issued a recall for its 2-pound turkey recipe raw and frozen pet food, distributed in 12 U.S. states and parts of Canada, after it tested positive for the H5N1 bird flu virus, resulting in the death of a house cat.

General

Modern Slavery

Australia has announced significant changes to its Modern Slavery Act, following an independent review that identified the need for stronger measures to combat modern slavery effectively. The government has agreed to implement 25 of 30 recommendations, which include introducing penalties for companies that fail to submit or falsify required reports. The reforms will also enhance transparency by publishing lists of high-risk sectors and non-compliant companies.

Child Labour used at Seaboard Triumph Foods supplied by hygiene services contractors. The violations involve 11 children working at a Sioux City Pork Processing plant. Qvest LLC must pay \$171,000 in federally-imposed fines. A second contractor at Seaboard Triumph Foods LLC in Sioux City is the second one that employed children to do dangerous work in Iowa City.

A Bay of Plenty kiwifruit labour supply company and its director have been ordered to pay \$100,000 in penalties after underpaying three migrant workers tens of thousands over several years.

Environmental

The UK government is committed to phasing out harmful neonicotinoid pesticides (clothianidin, imidacloprid, thiamethoxam) due to their impact on bees and other pollinators. These pesticides, banned for general use since 2018, have occasionally been permitted through emergency authorisations for crops like sugar beet. The government plans to revise its approach to emergency authorisations, emphasising pollinator safety, and explore legislative options to prohibit such authorisations for harmful neonicotinoids. This involves setting stricter guidelines, applying the precautionary principle, and ensuring regulatory coherence with devolved governments. Pollinators contribute approximately £500 million annually to UK crop production, but their populations are declining due to pesticides, habitat loss, and other pressures. Neonicotinoids, which persist in soil and affect pollinator behaviour and survival, are a significant concern. Emergency authorisations will be limited to essential cases, ensuring they align with environmental protection goals. Legislative and policy updates aim to safeguard pollinators while aiding farmers in transitioning to sustainable practices.

EUDR

Implementation of the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), a new law aimed at ensuring that products imported to or exported from EU markets no longer contribute to deforestation and forest degradation globally. While the new agreement will delay the implementation of the law, it also rejected Parliament's proposal to ease the new rules through the creation of a "no risk" category which would exempt countries assessed as posing little deforestation risk from most of the EUDR requirements.

Sustainability

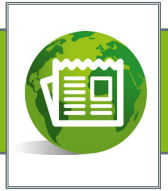
MarinTrust and the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) have partnered to streamline certification processes, reducing duplication and costs for marine ingredient producers.

Holyhead Disruption

Holyhead in Anglesey, North Wales, was forced to close following damage during storm Darragh and is not set to reopen until at least the 15th January causing disruption on the major sea route between Dublin and Great Britain.

Mexico

Mexico's government announced that



it will raise the minimum wage by 12% starting in 2025 in a bid to help the poorest workers.

Malaysia

Floods in Malaysia, affecting states like Johor, Melaka, and Kelantan, have disrupted vegetable production, causing supply shortages and significant price hikes. The crisis intensified with similar flooding in Thailand, impacting imports. Farmers face delays in replanting until floodwaters recede, exacerbating the supply gap. Key vegetables like sawi, bayam, and kangkung now cost over double their previous prices, with tomatoes and red peppers seeing similar spikes. The Malaysian Federation of Vegetable Farmers warns the situation

may persist into early 2025 while authorities predict further flooding, raising concerns over food supply stability and potential market manipulation amidst shortages.

Lithuania

Lithuania's vegetable harvest has been significantly impacted by summer rains, leading to a loss of up to half of potential yields. The worst-affected crops include cabbage, which is expected to be in short supply in the spring. As a result, Lithuanian farmers, like Saulius Zakas, have started shipping vegetables, especially potatoes, abroad to countries like Ukraine, Serbia, and Moldova. The demand for Lithuanian vegetables, particularly carrots, has risen, with shipments to Latvia and Estonia

starting earlier than usual due to local shortages.

However, this shortage has led to increased prices and a reliance on imports from countries like Egypt, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. The EU may face further challenges with vegetable supply and authenticity as third-country imports become more prevalent, potentially leading to concerns about quality and traceability.

Weather

La Niña conditions are most likely to emerge into January 2025 (59% chance), with a transition to ENSO-neutral most likely by March-May 2025 (61% chance).

Try Our New Paperless Sample Submission App when submitting samples for testing to Food Forensics

If you have not tried out new paperless sample submission solution—the Food Forensics mobile app, designed for both iOS and Android you're missing out! This intuitive, easy-to-use app makes sample submissions faster, more accurate, and more sustainable than ever.

The app is ready for you to start using today! To set up your account, simply email us at appsupport@foodforensics.co.uk, and we'll get you and your team started. Need access for others in your organisation? Just share their email addresses, and we'll include them too.

For any questions or additional guidance, our team is here to help. We also offer a quick 10-minute demo via Teams—just let us know if you'd like to see the app in action. Click here <https://youtu.be/9677v1cpl6A> to view a quick app explainer video that showcases how easy it is to use.

IN THE NEWS: December

Protein

NFCU officers, together with police, attended a location in London on Monday 25 November 2024 where they discovered unrefrigerated vans containing 48 sheep carcasses. The meat is thought to be illegal, having undergone a smoking process with its skin on, and is not traceable. Meat should have traceability from farm to fork and be subject to checks by FSA vets and meat hygiene inspectors.

Between 6-7 December more than 6 tonnes of illegal meat was discovered by Dover Port Health Authority, including seizures from Romania that have been affected by African swine fever.

Three individuals were arrested in India for manufacturing adulterated protein powder after a Delhi man reported health issues from consuming the product.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is issuing a public health alert for frozen ready-to-eat pork mortadella products that may have been illegally imported from Ecuador, a country ineligible to export meat and poultry products to the United States. FSIS is continuing to investigate the origins of this product, and there may be additional products

affected.

Around 40 drivers employed by logistics firm Culina have announced plans to strike as the result of a pay dispute. Culina's contract with Avara Foods Hereford who supply Tesco and Marks & Spencers to deliver poultry from abattoirs to supermarket warehouses is affected. Despite being in pay negotiations since April, no offer has been made to drivers who have been left with little choice but to take industrial action.

Dairy

1440kg of local ghee was seized as adulterated and substandard in Sargodha, Pakistan. Machinery and materials were also seized.

Food Forensics develops an authenticity test for Halloumi. The certified method has been introduced to verify Cypriot milk in Halloumi Cheese.

915kg of adulterated paneer seized in India.

Authorities in Uttar Pradesh have exposed a long-running milk adulteration scheme led by a businessman, who was arrested for producing synthetic milk using harmful chemicals. Investigations revealed the businessman's 20-year operation of manufacturing and distributing adulterated milk and paneer through Agarwal Traders. During an

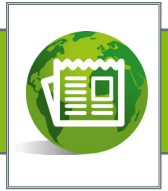
FSSAI raid, chemicals such as caustic potash, whey powder, sorbitol, and milk permeate powder were seized. Agarwal used just five milliliters of chemicals to produce two litres of synthetic milk, adding expired sweeteners and flavouring agents to mimic genuine milk. Officials are investigating his distribution network and the spread of these products over six months.

Fish & Seafood

USA-based NGO, Mercy for Animals, has called out leading UK retailers over their prawn sourcing practices. They claim many supermarkets are sourcing from farms using inhumane practices including eyestalk ablation and ice-slurry slaughter.

The Mississippi shrimp industry is struggling due to an influx of imported shrimp, which is being misrepresented as local, authentic Gulf shrimp. Many restaurants advertise domestic shrimp but serve imported varieties, such as Argentinian pink shrimp, instead. A study by SeaD Consulting revealed that 92% of restaurants claiming to serve Royal Red Shrimp were actually selling foreign shrimp, deceiving consumers who paid premium prices for what they believed was local seafood.

Two men have been sentenced to prison for smuggling juvenile American eels, a practice that has raised significant concerns about food fraud



and authenticity. They were found guilty of harvesting eels in Puerto Rico, transporting them illegally to the Dominican Republic, and then shipping them to Asia, where they would be sold at high prices. This trafficking of juvenile eels, known as glass eels, disrupts fair trade markets and threatens the sustainability of eel populations.

Produce

An investigation by the BBC has claimed that several "Italian" tomato purees sold in UK supermarkets may contain tomatoes grown and processed in China, including in Xinjiang, where forced labour involving Uyghur Muslims has been reported. Despite claims on labels suggesting Italian origins, 17 products, many from the Italian processor Petti, were found to "likely contain" Chinese tomatoes based on lab analysis. Xinjiang, a region in China with ideal growing conditions, is implicated in forced labour allegations involving Uyghurs. Workers report abuse and harsh quotas in tomato fields, corroborated by UN findings. All supermarkets deny the findings, citing internal investigations. Petti Group, a major Italian processor, was linked to Chinese imports and faced allegations of passing off Chinese tomatoes as Italian. Petti denied wrongdoing but acknowledged purchasing from Chinese suppliers, including companies tied to forced labour.

The import of Pakistani mandarins into Uzbekistan has been halted after fake documents and pests were detected in a shipment of mandarins from Pakistan. Counterfeit phytosanitary certificates were used.

23.5 tonnes of oranges and 650 kg of avocados were seized in the Algarve, the transporters did not have any documentation pertaining to the origin, variety and category of fruit as is required. The fruit reportedly originated from Spain.

Authorities in the Dominican Republic seized 9,500 kg of cocaine concealed within a banana shipment destined for Europe, marking the country's largest drug interception. The narcotics, originating from Guatemala, were found in 320 bags with a street value of \$250 million. Investigations into port personnel and attempts to reroute the drugs to Belgium highlight the shipment's sophisticated smuggling efforts.

A landmark ruling in China has set a precedent for protecting Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) in the blueberry industry. The court ruled in favour of MBO in a case against an unlicensed nursery for the illegal reproduction, propagation, and sale of the Ridley 1602- Eureka Sunrise (L25) blueberry variety. This ruling highlights

the growing issue of food fraud, where unlicensed propagation of protected plant varieties undermines authenticity and industry standards.

A significant drug smuggling operation in the UK involved hiding illicit substances - heroin, cocaine, cannabis, and amphetamines - inside cargoes of onions, garlic, and ginger. This operation exploited the authenticity of these common food products to evade detection, leveraging innocent haulage firms as fronts. The gang used false companies and warehouses in the Netherlands and the UK, with ringleader Paul Green orchestrating the illegal shipments. The fraudulent activities included using front businesses and altering identities to avoid law enforcement. Despite drug seizures, the operation persisted, with up to four shipments per week, exploiting the legitimate food trade to smuggle narcotics. The scale of the operation was unprecedented, with an estimated value of £2 billion to £7 billion.

Ingredients

60,050 kg of adulterated coconut powder worth 92.47 lakh was seized from Akash Trading Co. in Begum Bazar, Telangana, India. The company was found repacking imported desiccated coconut powder mixed with loose, un-desiccated powder under various brand names.

Alkemist Labs has identified 20 nutraceutical ingredients at high risk of adulteration and contamination, following identity testing of powdered, whole, liquid, and finished products using High-Performance Thin-Layer Chromatography (HPTLC). Ingredients such as ashwagandha, valerian root, lemon balm, lion's mane, and reishi mushrooms are among those flagged. Other ingredients to watch include botanicals like dong quai, beetroot, chamomile, oregano, stevia, and mushrooms such as turkey tail and lion's mane. 30% of botanicals flagged earlier in 2024, including lion's mane, ashwagandha, and stevia, remain problematic. Elderberry, previously a top concern, did not appear in the latest findings, suggesting improved supplier vigilance.

Beverage

5 dead in Libya from alcohol adulteration. Methanol is suspected.

Moravian wine from the Czech Republic recalled as it was not in conformity with the described region and vintage.

The Hyderabad Police Commissioner's Task Force (South Zone) and GHMC Food Safety team raided a tea manufacturing

unit in Chandanagar for allegedly adulterating tea powder. They seized 165 kgs of adulterated tea powder, including 130 kgs in packets and 35 kgs of loose tea powder, along with food colours and cardamom flavour used in the process. The accused, was using artificial colours like sunset yellow and cardamom flavour to make the tea powder appear as high-quality.

930 litres of expired cold drinks and banned ingredients were seized in raids in Pakistan.

Oil

Extra virgin olive oil adulteration with lower quality of olive oil in Turkey. EVOO mixed with seed oils were uncovered.

Antonio Luque, head of Dcoop, one of the world's largest olive oil cooperatives in Spain, has accused some companies of adulterating olive oil with cheaper alternatives like sunflower oil or pomace. While no specific companies were named, Luque described this fraud as an "open secret" highlighting its impact on lowering olive oil prices and undermining product authenticity.

Spices

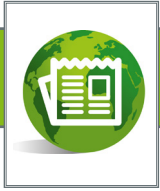
2000kg of adulterated red chilli was seized following raids on two production units in Pakistan.

Honey

South Africa's Department of Agriculture is cracking down on food fraud by removing fake honey products from store shelves. Inspections in Gauteng uncovered over 1,400 mislabelled "honey-based" syrups, resulting in fines for two wholesalers. These counterfeit products mislead consumers, harm local producers, and pose health risks.

Grain

The National Agricultural Products Quality Management Service (NAQS) uncovered fraudulent practices by 33 grain distribution companies in South Korea. The offenses included mislabelling grain grades, selling older grain as new, and mismatched labelling of grain varieties. 3,717 inspectors investigated 6,000 locations nationwide since September, 1815 companies faced criminal charges, and 18 were fined a total of 8.23 million won. Examples of fraud included ordinary-grade rice falsely labelled as top-grade. Last year's glutinous rice was repackaged as 2024 harvest and genetic analysis exposed mislabelled grain varieties.



FOOD SAFETY: December

Country	No of Alerts
France	68
Turkey	38
Belgium	28
Italy	27
Germany	26
United States	25
China	22
India	21
Poland	18
Netherlands	18
Czechia	14
United Kingdom	13
Spain	12
Egypt	11
Vietnam	9
Canada	9
Denmark	9
Thailand	8
Romania	7
Switzerland	7
Sri Lanka	7
Austria	6
Australia	6
Ireland	6
Ukraine	6
New Zealand	5
Norway	4
Ecuador	4
Iran	4
Kenya	4
Sweden	4
Brazil	4
Portugal	4
Finland	3
Albania	3
Korea	3
Argentina	3
Luxembourg	3
Peru	3
Ghana	2
Uganda	2
Afghanistan	2
Morocco	2
Pakistan	2
Russia	2
Indonesia	2
Myanmar	2
Bangladesh	2
Kazakhstan	2
Singapore	2
Syria	2
Colombia	2
Israel	2
Sudan	2
Greece	2
Serbia	2
Mongolia	1
Azerbaijan	1
United Arab Emirates	1
Slovenia	1
Hong Kong	1
Taiwan	1
Ethiopia	1
Slovakia	1
Venezuela	1
Chile	1
Rwanda	1
Cambodia	1
Algeria	1
Guatemala	1
Bulgaria	1
Estonia	1
Madagascar	1
Hungary	1

SUMMARY



There were **439 Red**, **49 Amber** and **36 Green** for a total of **524 safety alerts and product recalls*** in December.



The majority of alerts were for bacterial pathogens and pesticides (22.7% and 16.9% respectively). Natural contaminants remained third with 10.8%.



119 Bacterial pathogen alerts (54% Salmonella, 32% Listeria); E.coli accounted for 11% of which 57% were STEC.



89 Pesticide alerts (22% Chlorpyrifos, 8% Ethylene oxide, and 6% Oxamyl)

Top 3 alerts by commodity

- 1. Ingredients:** Nuts & seeds, herbs & spices, rice/pasta/noodles
- 2. Produce:** Vegetables, fruit and dried fruit
- 3. Protein:** Chicken, beef and sausage

Top 3 number of alerts by county of origin

- 1. France:** Cheese, pate, sausage
- 2. Turkey:** Dried fruit, herbs and spices, nuts & seeds
- 3. Belgium:** Chicken, cheese, herbs and spices

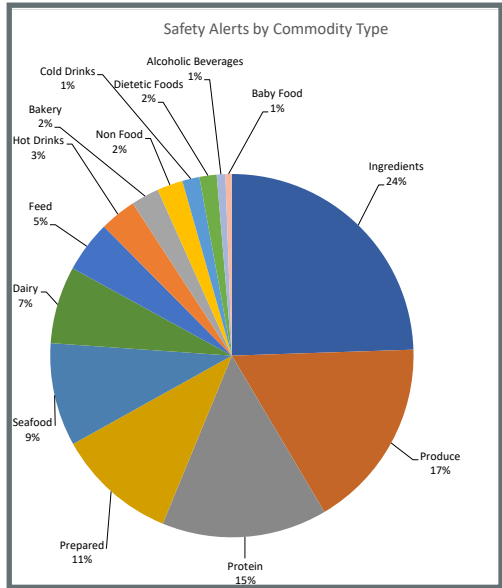
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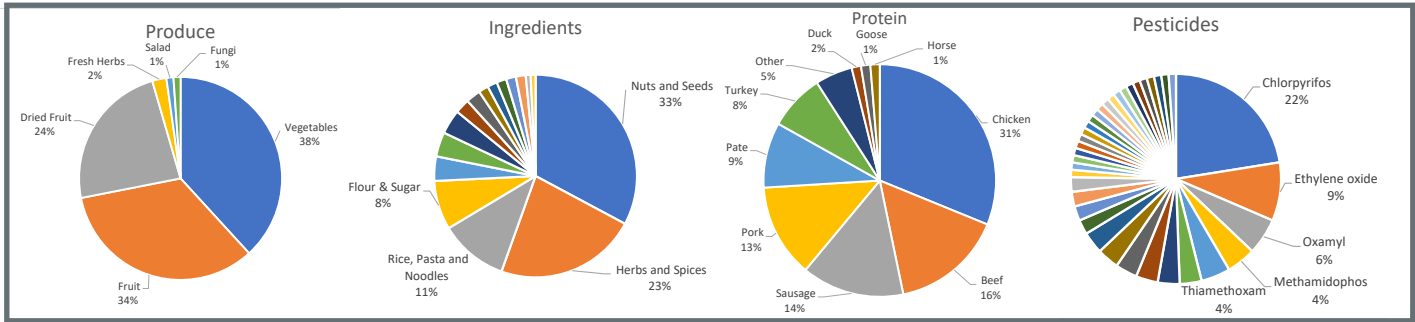
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*Safety alerts & product recalls compiled from RASFF, FDA, AFSCA,CFIA, Rappel Consommateur, potraviny na pranyr, SFA, CFS, MPI, FSAI & Food Standards AU

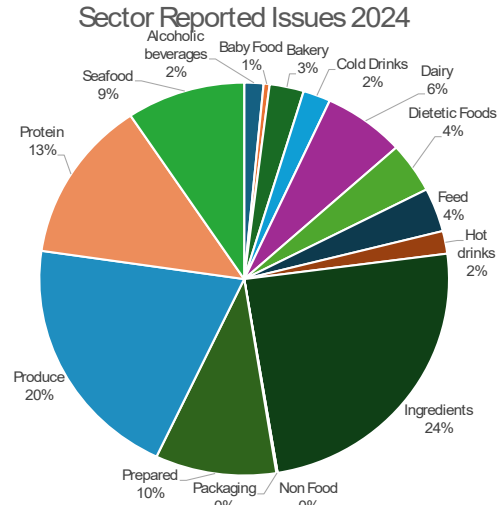
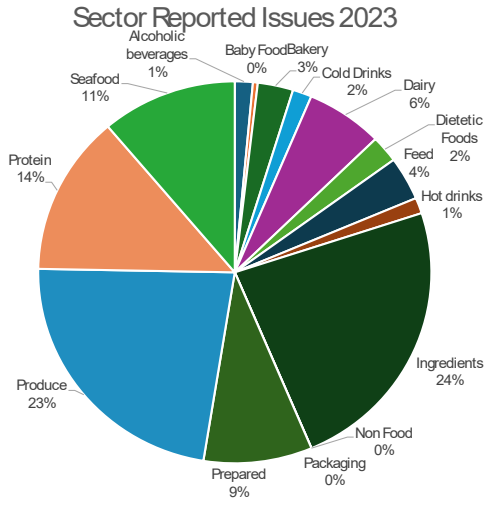


Total 524

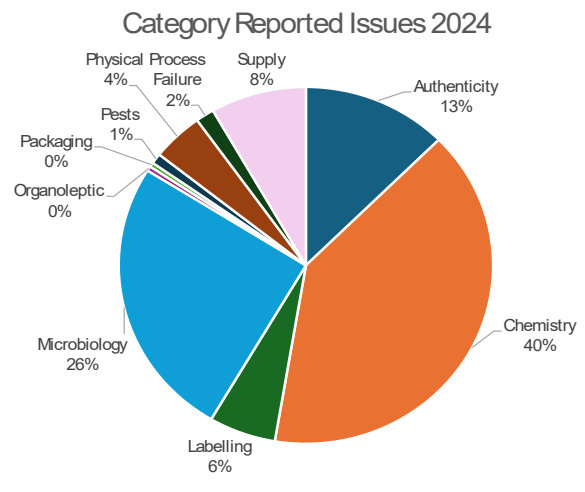
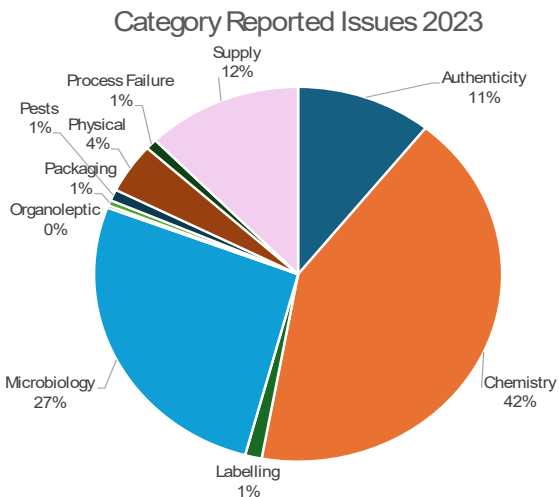




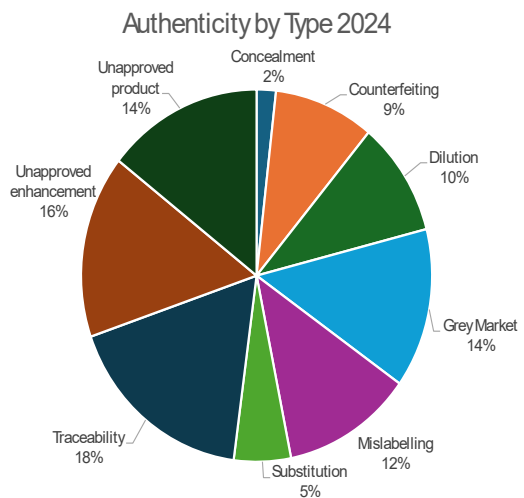
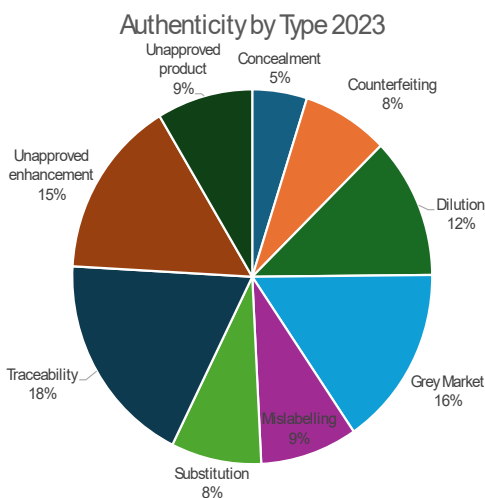
Knowledge Base Trends



During 2024 there were significantly more issues reported than in the previous 12 months. Ingredients, prepared and dietetic foods all saw large increases in the number of reported issues although the pattern was similar.



2024 saw an increase in authenticity issues as well as labelling. There were fewer reported supply issues.



Quite a different pattern in 2024 with an increase in mislabelling and unapproved products compared to 2023.

This information comes from the on-line Food Forensics Knowledge Base platform. If you are interested in access to Knowledge Base and would like a (no pressure) 15 min demo please contact barry.hilton@foodforensics.co.uk or info@foodforensics.co.uk