

# Food safety inspections

DGAL - French Directorate General for Food



# FOOD SAFETY

SOURCE: FRENCH DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR FOOD TOTALS - NOV 2014

The organisations that work in the food sector are responsible for the products they place on the market: they take the appropriate steps to produce safe, healthy products and are accountable to the ministry's control authority (DGAL), which carries out inspections.



**+500,000**  
farms  
to inspect



**+400,000**  
processing, retail  
and catering sites  
to inspect



**+4,000**  
inspectors  
in the decentralised  
services



**14,000**  
State-registered  
public health  
veterinarians



Total cost  
of health inspections:  
**€350 million/year**

## PRODUCTION

arable and livestock  
farms and fisheries

## PROCESSING

cooperatives, dairy industry,  
abattoirs, manufacturing  
of fish -or meat- based products,  
animal feed

## DISTRIBUTION

transport, warehousing,  
institutional or commercial  
catering services  
and shops

## BORDERS

on animals, plants  
and imported or exported  
foodstuffs



## WHERE ARE INSPECTIONS CARRIED OUT ?

### ALL LINKS IN THE FOOD CHAIN ARE INSPECTED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



**75,000**  
site inspections  
to check  
food safety



**30,000**  
farms  
inspections



**6,900** inspections  
on the use  
of plant health  
products on farms  
or during  
distribution

### WHAT IS INSPECTED ?



Implementation of **appropriate measures**  
to ensure product quality in terms of health.



Compliance with **hygiene conditions** at sites  
(animal cleanliness, integrity of the cold chain, etc.).



The **presence of contaminants\*** in animal and plant  
foodstuffs and animal feed, by taking samples  
that are analysed by a network of accredited  
laboratories and **30 national reference laboratories**.  
Over **800,000** analysis results are produced.

\*banned and anabolic substances, veterinary medicines,  
environmental contaminants and harmful biological agents -  
salmonella, listeria, etc.



### IN CASES OF NON-ADHERENCE TO REGULATIONS OR COMPLIANCE FAILURES

Operators can be ordered to pay fines or charged with an offence, products can be withdrawn from the market or destroyed, and authorisations can be suspended or sites closed down.



# Contents

The food safety system .....	4
Official health inspections .....	6
Key figures .....	10
Risk assessment, studies and observations .....	11

# The food safety system



## Fundamental principles

- ▶ **Separating risk assessment from risk management;**
- ▶ **A single chain of command;**
- ▶ **An integrated approach** «from field to plate»;
- ▶ **Responsibility of actors** in the food sector (producers, processors and distributors) to implement their own controls on the basis of self-regulation, to ensure they market safe, healthy products;
- ▶ Official inspections based on **risk analysis**;
- ▶ **Continuous amendments to regulations** to take account of scientific and technical changes in the health sector and societal expectations;
- ▶ **A system of accreditation and controls of organisations** under the responsibility of the public authorities, who have the power to sanction when necessary;
- ▶ **Identification and traceability** of products;
- ▶ **A national alert network** and a European alert network for ongoing health monitoring and swift, effective mobilisation if a potential hazard appears;
- ▶ The ability of the public authorities to manage risks, particularly in emergency situations, thanks to **an appropriate regulatory arsenal**.





## The French Directorate General for Food (DGAL) in brief

The Directorate monitors:

- food safety and quality,
- animal health and welfare,
- plant health and protection.

### LEVERS FOR ACTION:

- officials authorised to carry out inspections and impose corrective measures,
- quality of inspections and health policy,
- management of health emergencies.

The DGAL also acts to defend French positions at a European and international level.

It manages France's national food policy and coordinates regional action plans to reflect local situations.

### WITH WHAT RESOURCES?

The DGAL implements public policy at an operational level, employing **4,800** staff who rely on both a national network and intermediaries with a wide range of skills, including **14,000** State-registered public-health veterinarians, **30** national reference laboratories and around **150** specialist analytical laboratories, mainly at the level of the *départements*.

It relies on the risk-assessment activities of ANSES (the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety), to which it refers regularly and over which it exercises supervisory authority at an operational level.

Number of referrals to ANSES by the DGAL (2014): 53 of which 20 related to animal health, 27 to plant health and 6 to food.



### To find out more

<http://agriculture.gouv.fr/Rapport-d-activite-2014-DGAL>

# Official health inspections



## Inspections of foodstuffs

### OBJECTIVES OF INSPECTION AND MONITORING PLANS

These are an essential tool for managing food safety and at the same time, contribute to promoting French exports of agricultural and processed food products.

The plans are designed to:

- verify the health quality of food products and impose a level of control on professional practices and behaviours,
- gather data to assess consumer exposure to food-safety risks and define appropriate management measures to reduce them,
- monitor levels of contamination in foodstuffs, particularly in sensitive products.

Moreover, within the context of the single market and the free movement of goods, plans of this kind respond to the need for harmonised controls at the European level to ensure consistent safety standards across all Member States.

Every year, the French Directorate General for Food implements a set of **monitoring and inspection plans** (PSPC) related to the contamination of foodstuffs of plant and/or animal origin and animal feed<sup>1</sup>, including imported foods. **It also carries out controls (inspections) on all organisations** involved in the food chain. Inspections are carried out on a number of specific foodstuffs during the Christmas and New Year period and in the summer.

Border posts with responsibility for **health controls on import** (from countries outside the European Union) are managed by a department with a national remit that reports to the DGAL: the Service d'inspection vétérinaire et phytosanitaire aux frontières (French Veterinary and Phytosanitary Border Inspection Service – SIVEP). These inspections are designed to avoid plant or animal diseases and products that are unfit for consumption from being imported into Europe.

---

(1) All monitoring and inspection plans are coordinated at the outset with the other ministries involved in food safety (Health and Consumer Affairs) and with the monitoring and risk assessment bodies (ANSES and the Institut national de Veille Sanitaire – National Health Monitoring Institute).

## THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN A “MONITORING PLAN” AND AN “INSPECTION PLAN”

The main aim of a **monitoring plan** is to assess the consumer’s overall exposure to a risk. It is always based on random sampling.

The main aim of an **inspection plan** is to look for anomalies, non-compliances and even fraud. It is based on targeted or suspected sampling, i.e. samples are taken on the basis of pre-determined targeting criteria.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF PLANS

Around 20 plans are implemented each year. They include:

- ▶ Inspection plans for **chemical residues** (banned substances, veterinary medicines, pesticides, heavy metals and dioxins/PCB) in primary production (animals reared for meat, poultry, rabbits, game, farmed fish, milk and honey);
- ▶ Monitoring and inspection plans for **animal feed**;
- ▶ A monitoring programme for antibiotic resistance in cattle, pigs, poultry, etc.
- ▶ Monitoring and inspection plans for contaminants in “**fishery products**” (dioxins/PCB, heavy metals, phycotoxins and histamine);
- ▶ Monitoring plans for radionuclides in animal foodstuffs;

- ▶ “**Microbiological**” monitoring and inspection plans, including for *E.coli*, *Listeria*, *salmonella*, etc.;
- ▶ Monitoring and inspection **plans for plant health products in plants**;
- ▶ Monitoring plans for imported products of animal origin arriving at **border control posts**, and so on.

The plans are drawn up in conjunction with other ministries responsible for managing health risks and the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES).

Around **65,000 samples** are taken in relation to the plans each year by the DD(CS)PP (Departmental Directorates of Social Cohesion and Public Protection), under the responsibility of the DGAL. The samples are analysed by the network of accredited laboratories with the support of the national reference laboratories. Over **800,000 analysis results** are produced.



## Inspections of farms and other sites

Monitoring and inspection visits are **carried out at every stage of the food chain** (arable and livestock farms, abattoirs, distributors, caterers and manufacturing sites).

**The timetable for official inspections is defined on the basis of a risk analysis** produced in accordance with a European regulation. Since 2009, a risk score has been calculated for each site, placing them in one of four categories (from I - very low risk to IV - high risk) on the basis of several criteria: theoretical risk, production volume, consumer sensitivity (children) and inspection score.

The inspection timetable covers all sites within the food sector (accredited, non-accredited

and direct sales). It is part of a longer term plan (over five years: 2011-2015) with inspections carried out on three separate grounds:

- ▶ **Prévention:** inspections on prevention grounds are scheduled for sites deemed to be most at risk.
- ▶ **Improvement:** these aim to improve the health situation in certain areas of activity and to assess the effectiveness of official inspections. The volume of inspections is set locally (e.g. integrity of the cold chain during transport).
- ▶ **Punitive:** “lightning raid” type inspections will be carried out in future, particularly at sites selling direct to the consumer. The choice of establishments to inspect and the volume of inspection will be decided locally, from the types of businesses selected at a national level.

A report on inspections carried out in the previous year is published in order to provide support for prevention among operators and professional organisations.

### Abattoirs

Inspections in abattoirs are carried out on a daily basis. Veterinarians are permanently on-hand in some 260 abattoirs used to butcher animals. Inspectors carry out individual inspections of animals, carcasses and site visits. Health inspections are also carried out by veterinarians in around 700 poultry abattoirs.

Detecting problems upstream of the processing chain is critically important for product safety.

## Results achieved: a very satisfactory level of compliance

The significant amount of work done in the field by staff of the departmental and regional services responsible for food safety, veterinary and plant health inspections plays an effective role in maintaining an excellent level of food safety in France.





All research combined, the results of analyses show a level of compliance that varies from 90% to 100%, depending on the plans implemented.

Detailed results for each plan are published annually in a summary report, available at <http://agriculture.gouv.fr/dispositif-surveillance-contrôle-sécurité-sanitaire-aliments-564>

## Managing food safety alerts

The DGAL's safety emergencies unit is informed of any non-compliant results of inspections carried out on food products. It provides technical support to the decentralised services for managing alerts and carrying out investigations, implements appropriate batch withdrawal or recall procedures and puts forward proposals for changes in the food safety system where necessary.

A result is classed as "non-compliant" when the maximum limit authorised by the regulations for the presence of a contaminant in a product is exceeded or a banned substance is detected.

## Combatting food crime

The Brigade nationale d'enquêtes vétérinaires et phytosanitaires (National Unit for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Investigations – BNEVP) has the authority to act throughout France. It focuses on organised crime and provides technical support to the inspection services, particularly in the case of a health crisis in the areas of veterinary or plant health. It has both administrative and judicial investigative powers and can be mobilised to intervene on the ground as an emergency strike force if necessary.

## What happens in the case of compliance failures?

Controls and inspections carried out on site at every stage of the food chain (arable and livestock farms, abattoir, distribution, catering and manufacturing sites) can be followed by varying degrees of administrative or criminal sanctions if compliance failures are detected.

These can range from a simple warning to a formal notice to remedy or full or partial closure, or even being charged with an offence.

View the brochure and video:

<http://alimentation.gouv.fr/enquetrice-de-l-alimentaire>

# Key figures



The actions of the Directorate General for Food lead to hundreds of thousands of control actions every year, covering the activities of professionals and farmers throughout the food chain.

## ▶ Inspections of imported foodstuffs:

- 46,000 batches of animals and animal products
- 47,000 batches of plants and plant products

## Food safety inspections

### 78,000 inspections including:

- ▶ 9,000 documentary inspections;
- ▶ 25,000 in processing and warehouse sites;
- ▶ 17,000 in institutional food services;
- ▶ 15,000 in commercial catering outlets;
- ▶ 12,000 in shops;
- ▶ 300 tonnes of products seized.
- ▶ These inspections have resulted in **14,500** actions, including 550 full or partial closures, 4,100 formal notices to remedy and 1,100 statements of offence.

### In relation to monitoring and inspection plans:

- ▶ **Around 65,000** samples of foodstuffs and animal feed scheduled each year (checking for the presence of dioxins, bacteria, viruses, antibiotic substances, etc.) of which 200 to 300 are found to be non-compliant.
- ▶ **800,000** analysis results.

## Animal health inspections

- ▶ 19,000 animal health inspections, leading to 400 formal notices to remedy;
- ▶ 150,000 farm health inspections;
- ▶ €21.3 million invested in prevention and animal health monitoring.

## Plant health inspections

- ▶ 6,600 farm inspections on the use of plant health products;
- ▶ 600 inspections of plant health products at the distribution stage;
- ▶ 400 plant controls (general health) at the production stage;
- ▶ 800 samples of plants at harvest to check for the presence of pesticide residues;
- ▶ 1,800 import controls on plants in the European Union.

# Risk assessment, studies and observations

These are used to measure the average quantity of a chemical substance consumed by the general population within different sub-groups (region, age, etc.). These data are necessary for more effective risk assessment of consumer health and are important for the work of risk managers.

## The Food Observatory: knowledge and understanding

The Food Observatory was formed in 2010 by the French Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Ministry for Consumer Affairs. It provides information for the public authorities and economic actors on changes in food supply and consumption. Among other things, it measures food quality in terms of health using objective indicators.

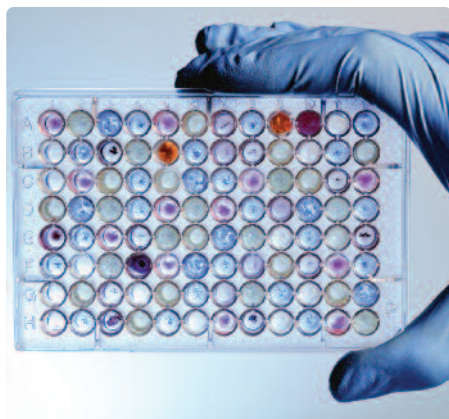
## Risk assessment: Anses

The French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES) provides multi-disciplinary, independent scientific expertise to ensure safety in the food, environmental and occupational fields. It provides expertise in risk assessment to the authorities to which it reports, notably the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health.

Every year, the Ministry of Agriculture refers to ANSES – with 53 referrals in 2014 – on a wide variety of issues, such as abnormal mortality in oysters, avian influenza virus or PCBs in the baie de Seine.

## Measuring consumer exposure

The aim of the Total Diet studies is to measure the population's exposure, through food, to problematic substances such as residues of plant health products, environmental contaminants, newly formed compounds, natural toxins, additives, trace or mineral elements, etc.



Design and content: French Directorate General for Food  
Layout: Information and Communication Delegation of the French Ministry of Agriculture,  
Agro-Food and Forestry  
Photo credits: ©Photothèque/Min.Agri.Fr and ©Thinkstock

March 2015

[agriculture.gouv.fr](http://agriculture.gouv.fr)  
[alimentation.gouv.fr](http://alimentation.gouv.fr)