



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture

Imported food inspection data: January to December 2018

Imported Food Inspection Scheme



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Introduction

The Department of Agriculture is responsible for managing Australia's biosecurity system. Every year, we help millions of people, goods, vessels and aircraft move into and out of Australia while minimising harm to environmental, animal, plant and human health.

We are also responsible for monitoring the safety of imported food at the border. Food entering Australia is subject to the *Imported Food Control Act 1992*. The Act provides for the inspection and control of imported food through the [Imported Food Inspection Scheme \(IFIS\)](#), a risk-based border inspection program.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) advises us on food that poses a medium or high risk to human health and safety. We classify this food as 'risk food' for inspection under the IFIS.

State and territory authorities are responsible for monitoring all food, including imported food that is available for sale.

This report provides summary data from imported food inspections conducted under the IFIS from 1 January to 31 December 2018. We publish these reports annually on our [Imported food inspection data](#) web page. We also publish monthly [failing food reports](#) on products that have failed inspection or analysis.

1 Imported Food Inspection Scheme

The department administers legislative requirements that imported food must meet. These requirements are identified in the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and the *Imported Food Control Act 1992*.

Under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, food imported into Australia must meet biosecurity requirements to be allowed into the country. The Act explains how biosecurity threats to plant, animal and human health in Australia and its external territories is managed.

Under the *Imported Food Control Act 1992*, imported food must meet requirements for food safety and compliance with Australia's food standards. This Act provides for the operation of the Imported Food Inspection Scheme (IFIS), a risk-based border inspection scheme. Under this scheme, we monitor importers' compliance with sourcing food that meets Australia's food standards and does not pose a risk to human health. Importers are responsible for ensuring that imported food complies with the Act and Australian food safety requirements.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is an independent statutory authority that develops and maintains the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. FSANZ also advises us on food that could pose a medium or high risk to public health. The Minister for Agriculture may then classify this food as 'risk food', as defined in the Imported Food Control Order 2001. Food not classified as risk food is 'surveillance food'.

Risk food is initially referred for inspection and analysis at a rate of 100% of consignments. This inspection rate is reduced to 25% following 5 consecutive passes and may be reduced to 5% of consignments after a further 20 consecutive passes. Surveillance food is referred for inspection and analysis at a rate of 5% of consignments.

For more information see our list of tests applied to:

- [risk food](#)
- [surveillance food](#)

We use electronic profiles in the Department of Home Affairs' Integrated Cargo System (ICS) to identify foods of interest and appropriate rates of referral. Once food is referred, our systems apply relevant tests and inspection rates based on the risk the food may pose and, for some food, the compliance history of the food producer.

When imported food fails inspection we undertake follow-up action such as treatment of the food to bring it into compliance, destruction or export. Subsequent imports of the same food are subject to inspection at the rate of 100% of consignments until a history of compliance is demonstrated.

State, territory and local governments have responsibility for ensuring that all food, including imported food, meets the requirements of food legislation (including the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code) at the point of sale.

1.1 Australian food trade

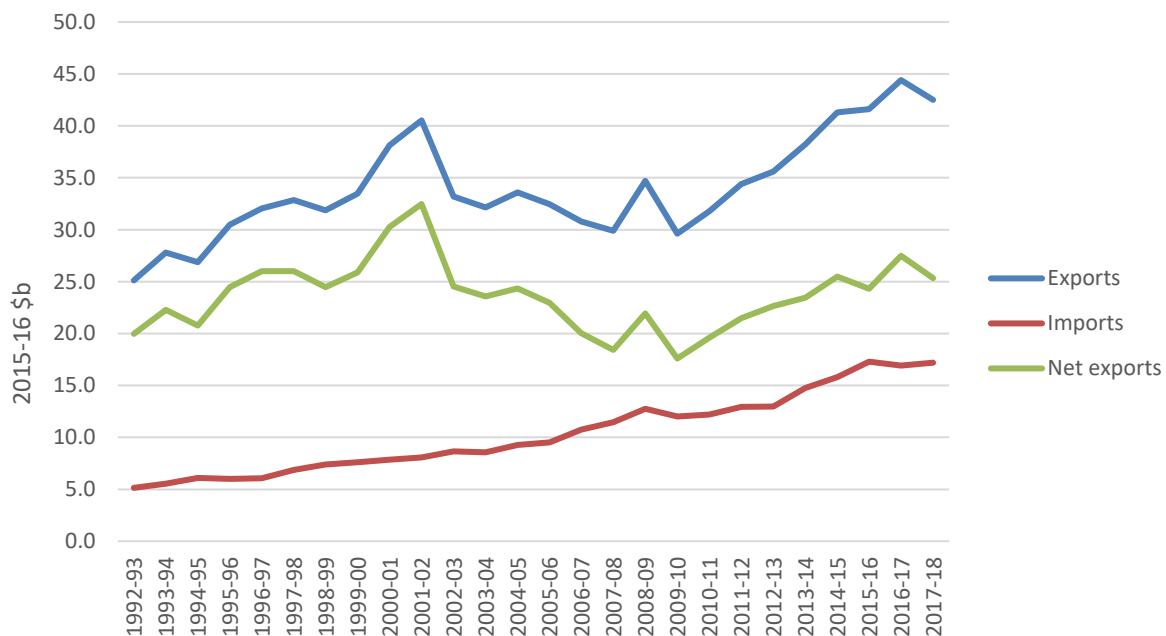
To help contextualise the inspection data, this report includes information on food trade, such as the composition of Australian food imports and countries of origin.

Data on food imports and food exports is presented in value terms, for each financial year. Figure 1 shows the trend for the last 25 years, including the net value for exports (difference between the value of food exports and food imports).

The value of Australian food exports in 2017–18 decreased by 4.3% (in real terms) to \$42.5 billion compared with the previous year. The value of food imported by Australian food businesses in 2017–18 increased by 1.6% (\$17.2 billion) on the previous year. As a result, Australia's net exports of food decreased by 7.9% to \$25.3 billion in 2017–18 (compared with \$26.9 billion in 2016–17).

In value terms, the proportion of imports compared with exports increased to 40.4% in 2017–18, up from 38.1% in 2016–17.

Figure 1 Australian food trade, by value, 1992–93 to 2017–18



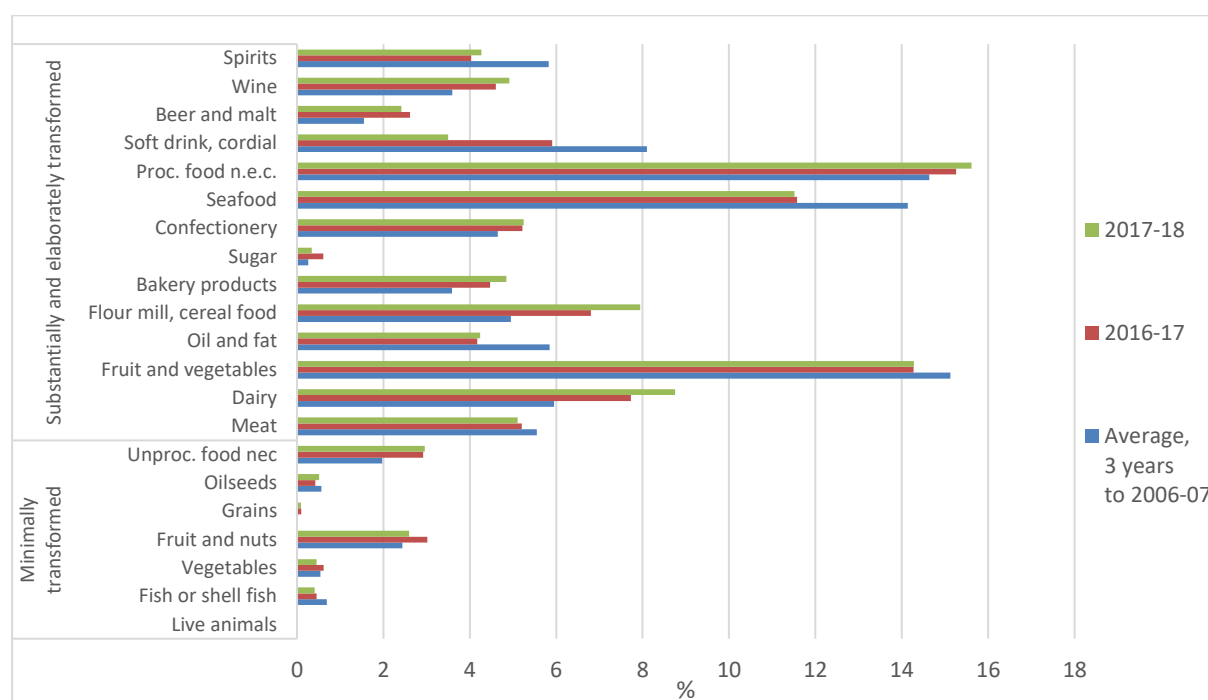
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

1.2 Australian food imports

Over the past 20 years, the value of food imported by Australian food businesses has increased. Most foods imported by Australian food businesses are processed products, followed by seafood, fruit and vegetables and dairy products.

The value of food imported by Australian food businesses increased, mainly as a result of increased imports of dairy products, milled flour and cereal foods, and processed foods (Figure 2). The increase was partially offset by fewer imports of soft drinks and cordials.

Figure 2 Australian food imports, by commodity, 2017–18, 2016–17 and 3-year average to 2006–07



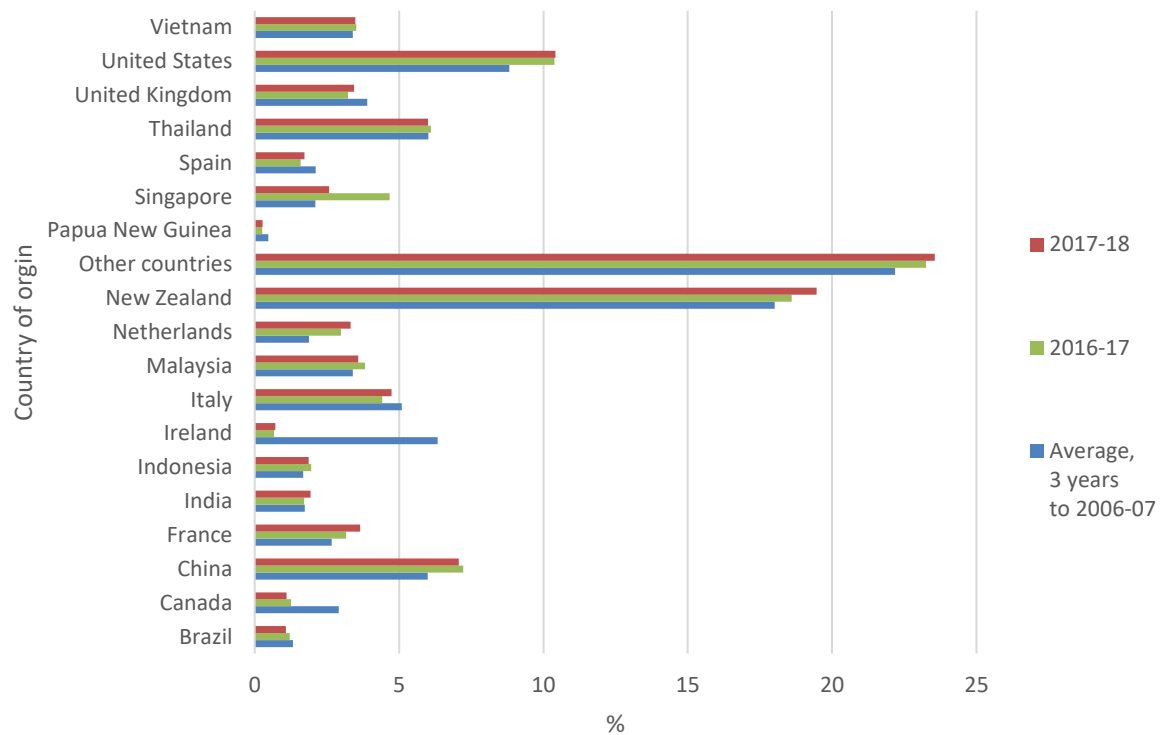
Proc. Processed. **n.e.c.** Not elsewhere classified. **Unproc.** Unprocessed.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

1.3 Source of Australian food imports

The composition of Australian food imports has been stable over the 11 years to 2018 (Figure 3). By value, New Zealand remains the major source of imports by Australian food businesses, accounting for \$3.3 billion or 19.5% of the total value of food imported in 2017–18 (Figure 3). Other major sources of food imports in 2017–18 were the United States (10.4%), China (7.1%) and Thailand (6.0%).

Figure 3 Share of imported food, by country of origin, 2017–18, 2016–17 and 3-year average to 2006–07



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

2 Imported Food Inspection Scheme inspection and testing summary

From 1 January to 31 December 2018, the compliance rate for all food inspected was 98.6%.

During this period:

- 21,296 entries of imported food were referred for inspection or analysis
- 38,748 lines of imported food were inspected. Of these lines
 - 26.3% were risk food
 - 69.4% were surveillance food
 - 4.3% were surveillance food subject to a Holding Order
- 62.6% of food inspections were on food from 10 countries; food from China, Italy and India were subject to the most inspections
- 119,499 tests (including label and visual checks) were conducted, comprising
 - 48,828 label and composition assessments
 - 23,375 analytical tests
 - 47,296 other tests

For detailed analysis of data see [Results of inspection and testing](#).

See the [Glossary](#) for terms used in this document.

3 Results of inspection and testing

The results of inspection and testing from January to December 2018 include:

- compliance rates against all tests conducted
- labelling compliance
- analytical testing data
- results by commodity group.

3.1 Compliance rates against all tests conducted

In 2018, 98.4% of all tests applied to imported food under the IFIS complied with Australian food standards (Table 1). Non-compliant labelling accounted for most non-compliance.

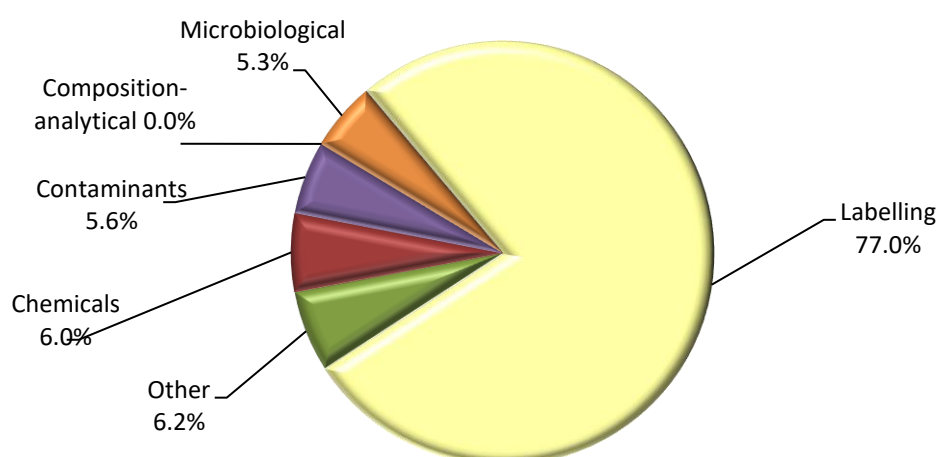
Table 1 All tests, product compliance rates, 2018

Test group	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Analytical	23,375	23,052	323	98.6
Labelling	48,828	47,351	1,477	97.0
Other	47,296	47,178	118	99.8
Total	119,499	117,581	1,918	98.4

Source: AIMS database

Figure 4 summarises the types of tests that returned 1,918 non-compliant results out of a total 119,499 tests applied.

Figure 4 Non-compliant test results, by test type, 2018



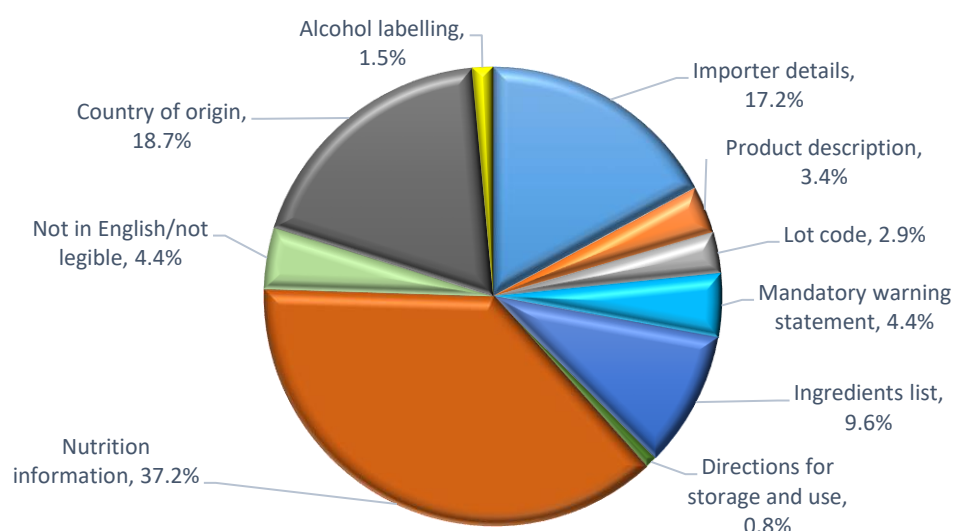
Source: AIMS database

3.2 Labelling compliance

In 2018, a high proportion of labels inspected did not comply with Australian food standards (Figure 5):

- 45.4% of labels lacked or listed incomplete importer, country of origin or ingredient details
- 37.2% of labels lacked or listed either incomplete or incorrect nutritional details.

Figure 5 Non-compliant labelling, by information type, 2018



Source: AIMS database

3.3 Analytical testing data

Analytical tests are grouped into 4 main types: chemical, composition (analytical assessment), contaminant and microbiological (Table 2). Each category consists of several tests, reported in detail in Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6.

In 2018, analytical test results returned a 98.6% compliance rate. Of the 23,375 analytical tests applied, 323 (1.4%) of the products tested failed against the standards.

The number of lines of food referred for inspection under IFIS and the number of tests applied to food may differ. This is because food subject to inspection is sampled and analysed based on the number of:

- batches and lots within each batch of food on the line referred for inspection
- tests applied to each sample of that food taken during inspection.

For example, 1 line of a cooked and processed meat product may be referred for inspection under the IFIS. The line contains 2 batches of the product, each with 1 lot. An officer will take 1 sample from each batch and apply the test relevant to this food. The tests applied to cooked and processed meat products are for *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Salmonella*. As a result, 2 samples have been taken from this 1 line of imported food with 2 microbiological tests applied to each sample. This would be reported as 1 line, with 4 separate test results.

Table 2 Analytical test, compliance rates, 2018

Test type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Chemical	4,650	4,536	114	97.5
Composition	94	94	0	100
Contaminant	7,987	7,879	108	98.7
Microbiological	10,644	10,543	101	99.1
Total	23,375	23,052	323	98.6

Source: AIMS database

Table 3 Chemical test, product compliance rates, 2018

Chemical	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Cannabidiol	Hemp seed and hemp seed products	4	4	0	100
Cephalosporins	Meat	501	501	0	100
Fluoroquinolones	Farmed fish and prawns	864	861	3	99.7
Fruit and vegetable residue screen	Fruit and vegetables	1,905	1,799	106	94.4
Malachite green	Farmed fish	286	286	0	100
Nitrofurans	Farmed prawns, honey	62	60	2	96.6
Pesticides	Meat	229	229	0	100
Quinolones	Farmed fish	294	291	3	99.0
Total THC	Hemp seed and hemp seed products	4	4	0	100
Virginamycin	Meat	501	501	0	100
Total	-	4,650	4,536	114	97.5

Source: AIMS database

Table 4 Composition analytical test, product compliance rates, 2018

Microbial agent	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Allergen – Dairy	Coconut drinks and coconut powders	19	19	0	100
C4 adulteration	Honey	25	25	0	100
Moisture content	Honey	25	25	0	100
Reducing sugar content	Honey	25	25	0	100
Total	-	94	94	0	100

Source: AIMS database

Table 5 Contaminant test, product compliance rates, 2018

Contaminant	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Aflatoxins	Nuts	952	916	36	96.2
Arsenic total	Cereal grains, cereal flours and processed cereals	962	962	0	100
Buprofezin ^a	Rice	1	0	1	0
Carbon monoxide	Tuna and barramundi fillets	18	13	5	72.2
Domoic acid	Bivalve molluscs	546	546	0	100
Erucic acid	Edible plant oils	445	445	0	100
Histamine	Fish	2,872	2,822	50	98.3
Hydrocyanic acid	Cassava chips	74	69	5	93.2
Inorganic arsenic	Seaweed (Hijiki)	6	6	0	100
Iodine	Seaweed (brown algae)	103	101	2	98.1
Lead	Cereal grains, cereal flours, processed cereals, canned and preserved fruit	1,352	1,344	8	99.4
PSP toxin	Bivalve molluscs	444	444	0	100
Tin	Canned fruit	212	211	1	99.5
Total	–	7987	7,879	108	98.7

^a Buprofezin testing commenced in response to evidence of non-compliance in a specific pathway.

Source: AIMS database

Table 6 Microbiological test, product compliance rates, 2018

Microbial agent	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
<i>Bacillus cereus</i>	Bean curd, tofu	91	84	7	92.3
Coagulase-positive staphylococci	Processed meats and cooked crustaceans	943	942	1	99.9
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Processed meats, water, seafood, and cheese	512	501	11	97.9
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	Cheese, ready-to-eat seafood, processed meats	2,421	2,407	14	99.4
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> - enumerated	Cheese, RTE finfish, slow-cured ham	1,164	1,164	0	100
<i>Salmonella</i>	Processed meats, seafood, dried coconut, dried chilli and pepper, sesame seeds, cheese	3,817	3,775	42	98.9
Standard plate count	Cooked crustaceans	1,095	1,073	22	98.0
<i>Vibrio cholerae</i>	Cooked prawns	601	597	4	99.3
Total	-	10,644	10,543	101	99.1

Source: AIMS database

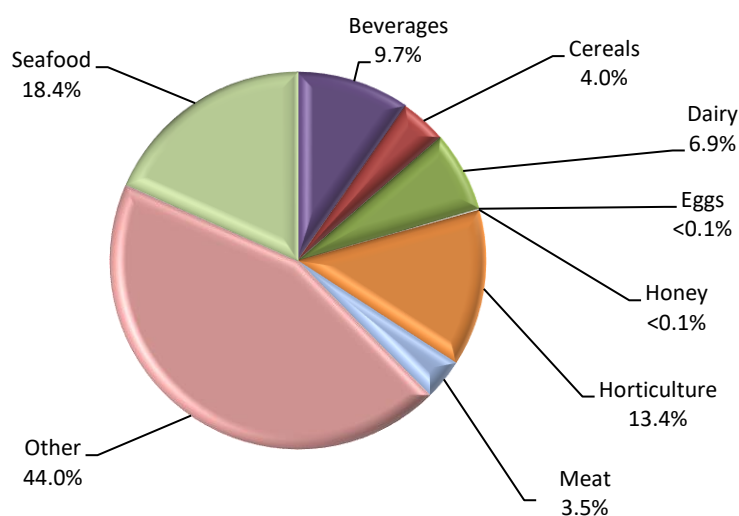
3.4 Results, by commodity groups

Figure 6 and Table 7 provide an overview of tests applied to food commodity groups. The results indicate the commodities most often tested and not the volume of trade in particular commodities. Several factors determine the frequency of inspections:

- commodity groups that contain more risk food or are imported more frequently will have a higher representation under the inspection activity
- the rate of inspection and analysis of food identified as 'failing food' is increased to 100% until compliance has been demonstrated.

3.4.1 Test data, by commodity groups

Figure 6 shows that seafood was the commodity subject to the most testing (18.4%) in 2018. This commodity includes fresh, chilled, frozen and processed seafood products. This was followed by horticulture (including fresh and processed fruit and vegetables) (13.4%).

Figure 6 Percentage of tests applied, by commodity group, 2018

[Appendix A](#) provides an overview of the analytical tests applied to the commodity groups and [Appendix B](#) lists the tariff codes associated with each commodity grouping.

Table 7 Inspection and test data, by commodity group, 2018

Commodity group	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Beverages	11,560	11,310	250	97.8
Cereals, flours and milled products	4,740	4,686	54	98.9
Dairy	8,234	8,176	58	99.3
Eggs	34	32	2	94.1
Honey	136	134	2	98.5
Horticulture	16,059	15,802	257	98.4
Meat	4,185	4,181	4	99.9
Other (incl. processed food)	52,571	51,509	1,062	98.0
Seafood	21,980	21,751	229	99.0
Total	119,499	117,581	1,918	98.4

Source: AIMS database

3.5 Other test data

In addition to labelling and analytical testing, other testing applied from January to December 2018 included composition assessments, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) government certification checks and visual assessments.

3.5.1 Composition assessments

These assessments check the labels for additives or ingredients that are not permitted or are in excess of permitted levels. Of the 48,828 assessments conducted in 2018, 101 labels were found to be non-compliant with Australian food requirements.

3.5.2 Bovine spongiform encephalopathy certificate checks

Food containing beef is inspected to ensure it is covered by the appropriate government certification, consistent with Australia's BSE policy. A fail is recorded when the food containing beef is not covered by the appropriate government certification. In 2018, of the 708 certificate checks conducted, 697 (98.4%) were covered by the appropriate government certification, 11 (1.6%) of certificate checks conducted were non-compliant (Table 8).

Table 8 Bovine spongiform encephalopathy certificate check, compliance rates, 2018

Test type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
BSE government certificate	708	697	11	98.4
Total	708	697	11	98.4

Source: AIMS database

3.5.3 Visual assessments

At each inspection, food is visually assessed to determine whether it is unsafe or unsuitable (for example, it contains foreign objects or shows signs of deterioration) In 2018, of the 46,412 visual assessments conducted, only 5 were non-compliant (Table 9).

Table 9 Visual assessment, compliance rates, 2018

Type of test	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Visual	46,412	46,407	5	99.9
Total	46,412	46,407	5	99.9

Source: AIMS database

3.5.4 Results, by country of origin

Under the IFIS, food is inspected if it is classified as risk food, irrespective of the country of export. The exception is where a food has previously failed inspection. Future consignments of that food from the producer in the particular country are inspected and analysed at a 100% rate of inspection and analysis until a history of compliance is re-established for the producer of the food.

The countries where importers frequently source food will always have a higher representation in inspection data (Table 10).

Table 10 Number of inspections, by country of origin, 2018

Country of origin	Lines inspected (no.)	Lines inspected (%)
China	4,501	11.6
Italy	2,992	7.7
India	2,929	7.6
Thailand	2,871	7.4
Japan	2,658	6.9
United States	2,195	5.7
Korea, Republic of	2,009	5.2

Country of origin	Lines inspected (no.)	Lines inspected (%)
France	1,410	3.6
Vietnam	1,366	3.5
Malaysia	1,315	3.4
Other	14,502	37.4
Total	38,748	100

Source: AIMS database

From 1 January to 31 December 2018:

- Food from China, Italy and India was subject to the most inspections
- 62.6% of food inspections were conducted on food from 10 countries; the remaining 37.4% concerned food from 129 countries.

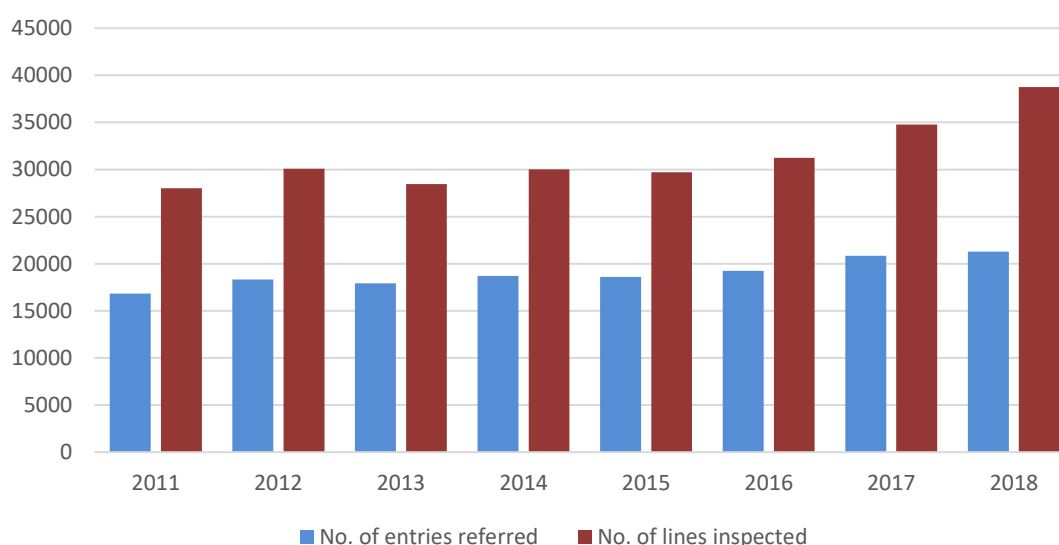
A significant proportion of food imports are from New Zealand. However, most food from New Zealand is not subject to the *Imported Food Control Act 1992* because it is covered by the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement between Australia and New Zealand. Under the arrangement, food produced by or imported into either country that meets one country's food standards may be legally sold in the other country.

3.6 Comparing inspection data reports since 2010

We have published IFIS data reports since 2006. Initially, reports were published every 6 months. Since 2017 we have published the reports annually.

Figure 7 summarises the number of food entries and lines inspected for each calendar year since 2011. The number of entries referred and lines inspected have increased since 2015, largely as a result of an increase in the volume of food imported.

Figure 7 Inspection activity, January 2011 to December 2018



Source: AIMS database

Figure 8 summarises the number of tests applied at inspection in each calendar year. A reduction in analytical testing in 2013 reflects changes that were made after a review of surveillance testing. The increase in the proportion of labelling tests applied reflects an increase in the volume of food imported (we check the labelling of all food referred to IFIS).

Figure 8 Tests conducted, January 2011 to December 2018



Source: AIMS database

Appendix A: Analytical tests applied to food

Table A1 Analytical tests applied to food, 2018

Food group	Risk or surveillance test	Analytical test
Coconut milk drinks	Surveillance	Beta-lactoglobulin Casein Total milk
Dairy products	Risk	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>
	Surveillance	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> (enumerated) <i>Salmonella</i>
Edible plant oils	Surveillance	Erucic acid
Fruit and vegetables	Surveillance	Fruit and vegetable residue screen <i>E. coli</i> (ready-to-eat frozen berries only) Hepatitis A (ready-to-eat frozen berries only) <i>E. coli</i> (sweet/sugar snap peas, fresh baby corn, fresh chillies, sun-dried and semi-dried tomatoes)
Fruit – canned and preserved	Surveillance	Lead Tin (canned only)
Fruit juices	Surveillance	Fruit and vegetable residue screen
Herbs and spices	Risk	<i>Salmonella</i>
	Surveillance	<i>Salmonella</i> (dried and powdered herbs)
Honey	Surveillance	C4 Adulteration Moisture content Reducing sugar content
Meat	Risk	Government certification for bovine spongiform encephalopathy Coagulase-positive staphylococci <i>E. coli</i> <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> <i>Salmonella</i>
	Surveillance	Pesticide screen <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> (enumerated) <i>E. coli</i> <i>Salmonella</i> Cephalosporins Virginamycin
Nuts and nut products	Risk	<i>Salmonella</i> (coconut) Aflatoxin
	Surveillance	<i>Salmonella</i> (chilled or frozen shredded coconut)
Seafood	Risk	Histamine <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> Coagulase-positive staphylococci <i>E. coli</i>

Food group	Risk or surveillance test	Analytical test
Plant-based products	Surveillance	<i>Salmonella</i>
		Standard plate count
		Paralytic shellfish poison (PSP)
		Domoic acid
		<i>Vibrio cholerae</i>
		Fluoroquinolones
		Malachite green
		Nitrofurans
	Risk	Quinolones
		Carbon monoxide (tuna and barramundi fillets)
		<i>Salmonella</i> (sesame seed and dried coconut)
		Inorganic arsenic (hijiki seaweed)
		Iodine (seaweed (brown algae))
		Hydrocyanic acid (cassava chips)
	Surveillance	Fruit and vegetable residue screen
		<i>Bacillus cereus</i> (tofu, soy bean or milk curd)
		Arsenic total (cereal grains, ready-to-eat cereal flours and processed cereals)
		Cannabidiol, total THC (hemp seed and hemp seed products)

Appendix B: Tariff codes applied to food commodity groups

Table B1 Tariff codes applied to food commodity groups

Commodity group	Tariff code
Beverages	2009
	2201 to 2208
Cereals	1001 to 1008
	1101 to 1109
Dairy	0401 to 0406
Eggs	0407 to 0408
Honey	0409
Horticulture	0701 to 0714
	0801 to 0814
	0904 to 0910
	1201 to 1208
	1210 to 1212
	1801 to 1802
Meat	0201 to 0212
	0504
	1601 to 1602
Seafood	0302 to 0307
	1603 to 1605
Other (including processed food)	0410
	0901 to 0903
	1301 to 1302
	1501 to 1504
	1506 to 1517
	1520 to 1521
	1701 to 1704
	1803 to 1806
	1901 to 1905
	2001 to 2008
	2101 to 2106
	2209
	2501
	3501 to 3503
	3505
	3507

Glossary

Term	Definition
AIMS	Computer system that receives data on imported goods from the Integrated Cargo System (ICS) and processes entries for imported food and quarantine purposes.
Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code	Details food standards applicable to food for human consumption in Australia. See the Food standards code .
batch	Food of a particular kind made or packed in a distinct manner that may include one or more lots.
entry	Department of Home Affairs electronic document generated using the ICS. An entry may contain one or more lines or food.
food	<p>Under section 3 of the Imported Food Control Act 1992,</p> <p>(1) Food includes</p> <p>(a) any substance or thing of a kind used, capable of being used, or represented as being for use, for human consumption (whether it is live, raw, prepared or partly prepared); and</p> <p>(b) any substance or thing of a kind used, capable of being used, or represented as being for use, as an ingredient or additive in a substance or thing referred to in paragraph (a); and</p> <p>(c) any substance used in preparing a substance or thing referred to in paragraph (a); and</p> <p>(d) chewing gum or an ingredient or additive in chewing gum, or any substance used in preparing chewing gum; and</p> <p>(e) any substance or thing declared to be a food under a declaration in force under section 6 of the <i>Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991</i>.</p> <p>(It does not matter whether the substance, thing or chewing gum is in a condition fit for human consumption.)</p> <p>(2) However, food does not include a therapeutic good within the meaning of the <i>Therapeutic Goods Act 1989</i></p> <p>(3) To avoid doubt, food may include live animals and plants.</p>
FSANZ	Food Standards Australia New Zealand is a bi-national government agency responsible for developing food standards and administering the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. FSANZ conducts the food risk assessment and advises the Department of Agriculture on food that poses a medium or high risk to public health.
holding order	An order made under section 15 of the <i>Imported Food Control Act 1992</i> that increases the rate of inspection of a surveillance food that has failed an imported food inspection. This targets the specific food from the specific producer in a specific country at a rate of 100% of consignments.
ICS	Integrated Cargo System, a computer system managed by the Department of Home Affairs
Imported Food Inspection Scheme	IFIS was established under the Imported Food Control Regulations 1993. It provides for inspection of food at the border to assess importer compliance with sourcing food that does not pose a risk to human health and meets Australian food standards.
inspection	Includes inspection (visual and label assessment) or inspection and analysis (samples taken and sent for analysis) as required.
line	Items of food being imported are recorded in the ICS as lines within the import entry. An import entry may consist of one line or many lines of products.
lot	A quantity of a food prepared or packed under the same conditions (ordinarily from a particular preparation or packing unit and during a particular time, ordinarily not exceeding 24 hours).

Term	Definition
lot code	A unique code that identifies a lot (quantity of food) and can be used for recall purposes if necessary.
risk food	Food that is classified as risk food in the Imported Food Control Order 2001. This kind of food is referred to AIMS by the ICS for inspection at the rate of 100% of imports. The rate is reduced in accordance with a history of compliance.
surveillance food	All other food not classified as risk. Referred to AIMS by the ICS for inspection at the rate of 5% of consignments.