



Food Safety
AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

5

CODE OF PRACTICE NO.5

Food Incidents and Food Alerts

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Food Incidents and Food Alerts

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Contents	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 PURPOSE	2
3 SCOPE	2
4 DEFINITIONS	3
5 RELATED DOCUMENTS	5
<hr/>	
PART 1 : INCIDENT AND ALERT NOTIFICATION MANAGEMENT	6
6 RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENTS	6
7 NOTIFICATIONS	13
8 MALICIOUS TAMPERING/INTENTIONAL CONTAMINATION OF FOOD	13
9 COMMUNICATIONS	13
10 INCIDENT CLOSURE	17
<hr/>	
PART 2 : SINGLE LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS	18
11 'SINGLE LIAISON' ARRANGEMENTS AND THIRD COUNTRY NOTIFICATIONS	18
ANNEX 1 – FSAI INCIDENT REPORT FORM	20
ANNEX 2 – EXAMPLE OF AN ALERT NOTIFICATION CATEGORY 1: FOR ACTION	22



I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Code of Practice is to set out the arrangements for responsibility of managing food incidents at local and national level involving food hazards as identified by food businesses, official agencies or other Member States (notified through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)) and the associated communications. The objective of this is to have a co-ordinated approach to ensure that food products identified as being a risk to consumers are controlled or removed from the food chain.

In most circumstances, problems will be identified by food producers themselves, who will normally initiate a product withdrawal/recall. The arrangements in the Code of Practice will assist such activities by facilitating the effective communication of information between food businesses and official agencies.

There will be other instances, for example as a result of the investigation of illnesses, through outbreaks of infectious disease or the testing of foods by official agencies, where a problem will be identified and action will need to be initiated independently of the food producer. A framework of the interaction between official agencies, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and food businesses are provided.

Part 2 of this document relates to investigations of food complaints associated with imported food. The Directive on Official Feed and Food Controls sets out administrative and co-operative arrangements for a 'single liaison' contact point in each Member State to assist in such investigations. Similarly, food exported from Ireland may lead to complaints in other countries and the same arrangements would apply.

2. PURPOSE

The objectives of this Code of Practice are to:

- Categorise food incidents for management
- Explain the management of RASFF notifications received by the FSAI
- Provide instruction for communicating food incident details to, and between, food businesses, official agencies and the FSAI
- Detail the arrangements for categorising, issuing, communicating and actioning national Food Alerts
- Detail the arrangements for investigating food complaints involving food imports from other Member States.

3. SCOPE

This Code of Practice applies to Food Incidents and Alert Notifications in relation to food only and not animal feed. It also applies to the exchange of information on food safety matters between Ireland and other Member States under the provisions of the Official Feed and Food Controls 'single liaison' arrangements.

This document is intended for use by all official agencies, the FSAI and food businesses.

It will need to be read in conjunction with other documents such as the FSAI's 'Guidance Note 10 – Product Recall and Traceability', those relating to the management of foodborne disease outbreaks and any existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in use dealing with incident management.

4. DEFINITIONS

Hazard

Hazard means as a biological, chemical or physical agent in, or condition of, food with the potential to cause an adverse health effect.

(Regulation 178 of 2002, Article 3)

Risk

Risk means a function of the probability of an adverse health effect and the severity of that effect, consequential to a hazard.

(Regulation 178 of 2002, Article 3)

Incident

Incident means the circumstances surrounding the identification of a hazard which poses a risk to health and can be considered as (but not exclusively):

- An event which has potentially harmful implications to the public resulting from the consumption of food;
- The identification of contaminated foodstuff, that if consumed may lead to illness;
- The identification of serious human illness that may be linked to contaminated food;
- The identification of unhygienic practices in a food business of such a degree as to present an immediate danger to consumers' health;
- The identification of irregular or illegal practices in any food business or in the distribution network that could pose a threat to consumers' health;
- Biological or chemical contamination resulting from deliberate tampering or a terrorist event.

Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)

Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) is a notification system which is operated by the European Commission to exchange information on identified hazards between Member States and covers food and feed.

Notifications are categorised as either alerts where there is an identified direct or indirect risk to health or Information Notifications which relate to information on a food or feed product which is unlikely to pose a risk to health, but which may be of interest to food authorities (such as consignments blocked at border inspection posts (BIPs) because of non-compliances or developments on food safety matters).

Food Alert

Food Alert means a notification issued by the FSAI to official agencies and food businesses relating

to an identified hazard. A Food Alert may result from, but not be limited to, information received by a RASFF notification; a problem identified by a food producer; a problem identified by an enforcement agency through food testing or investigative work.

Risk Analysis

Risk Analysis means the process consisting of three interconnected components: risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.

Risk assessment means the scientifically based process consisting of four steps – hazard identification; hazard characteristic; exposure assessment and risk characterisation.

Risk management means the process of weighing policy alternatives in consultation with interested parties, considering risk assessment and other legitimate factors and if need be, selecting appropriate prevention and control options.

Risk communication means the interactive exchange of information and opinions throughout the risk analysis process as regards hazards and risks, risk related factors and risk perceptions, among risk assessors, risk managers, consumers, food businesses, the academic community and other interested parties, including the explanation of risk assessment findings and the basis of risk management decisions.

(Regulation 178 of 2002, Article 3)

Official Agency

Official agency means an agency listed in the Second Schedule of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998 and includes an official agency carrying out functions under a service contract and acting on behalf of the Authority pursuant to section 48 of the Act.

Investigating Agency

Investigating agency means an official agency of the FSAI which has identified a hazard or is taking the lead in investigating an incident.

Food Business

Food business means any undertaking, whether for profit or not and whether public or private, carrying out any of the activities related to any stage of production, processing and distribution of food.

(Regulation 178 of 2002, Article 3)

Food Business Operator

Food business operator means the natural or legal person(s) responsible for ensuring that the requirements of food law are met within the food business under their control.

(Regulation 178 of 2002, Article 3)

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS

The following lists of legislation and guidance documents are relevant to this Code of Practice:

5.1 Legislation

- Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998
- Food Hygiene Regulations, 1950-89
- European Communities (Official Control of Foodstuffs) Regulations, 1998 (S.I. No. 95 of 1998)
- European Communities (Labelling, Advertising and Presentation of Food) Regulations, 2002 (S.I. No. 483 of 2003)
- European Communities (Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs) Regulations, 2001 (S.I. No. 400 of 2001)
- Regulations (EC) No. 178/2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down the procedures in matters of food safety
- Council Directive 89/397/EEC of 14 June 1989 on the official control of foodstuffs
- Council Directive 93/99/EEC of 29 October 1993 on the subject of additional measures concerning the official control of foodstuff
- Regulation (EC) No. 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules

5.2 Guidance Documents

- FSAI Guidance Note 10 Product Recall and Traceability
- Food Agency Co-operation Council Food Incident Management Plan
- Codex Alimentarius CAC/GL 19 Exchange of Information in Food Control Emergency Situations

PART I: INCIDENT AND ALERT NOTIFICATION MANAGEMENT

6. RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENTS

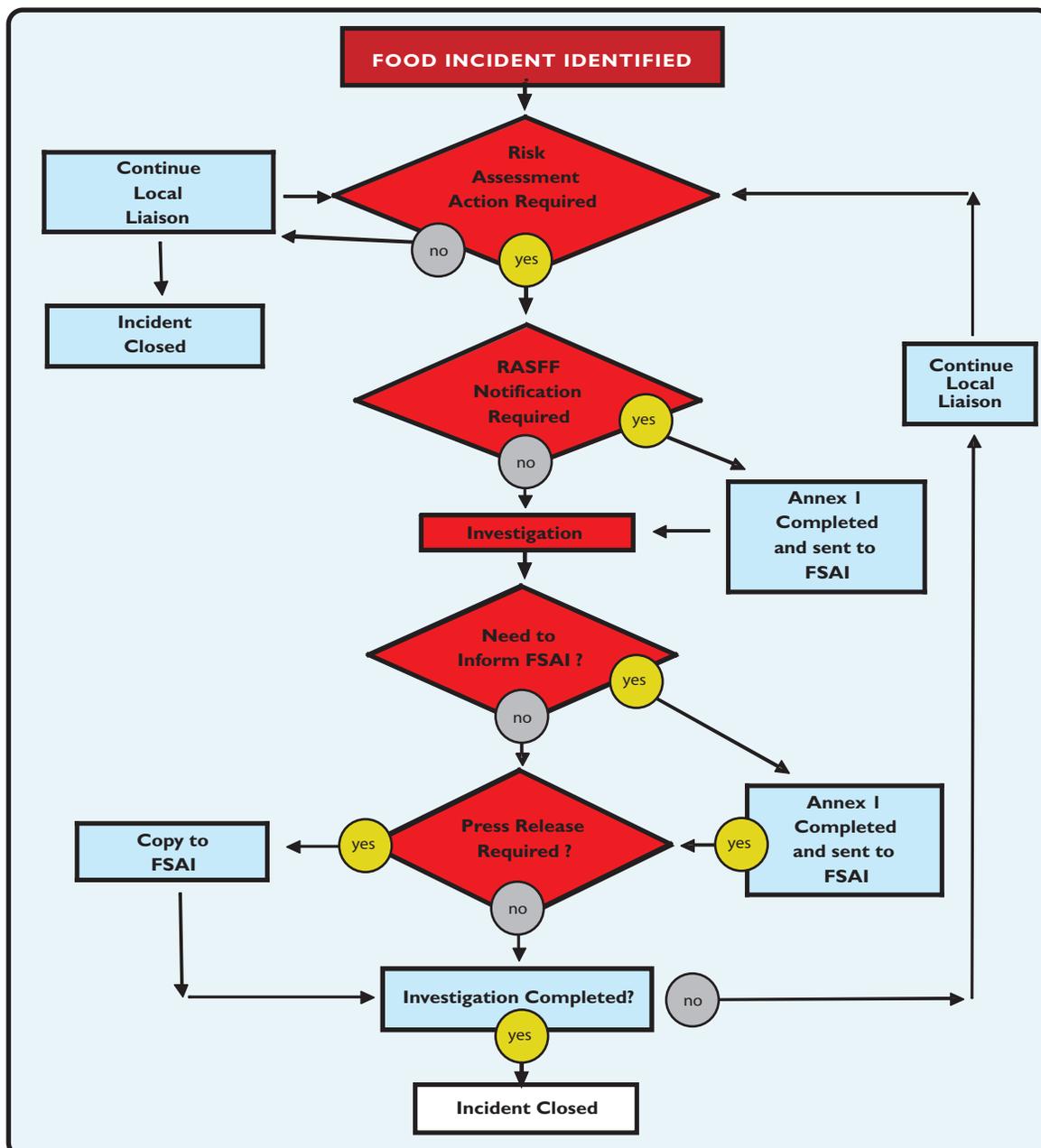
6.1 Role of the Official Agencies

Official agencies are likely to be the first contact point in dealing with an incident and will take the lead role in investigations. They will also:

- Identify the hazard giving rise to the incident
- Assess the risk
- Initiate action
- Communicate as necessary to other authorities, agencies, organisations and consumers
- Review activities on basis of information available
- Act as a contact point for information requests.

These actions may be taken individually or in co-operation with other agencies and/or the FSAI.

Flow chart I: Official agencies summarises the process associated with this role



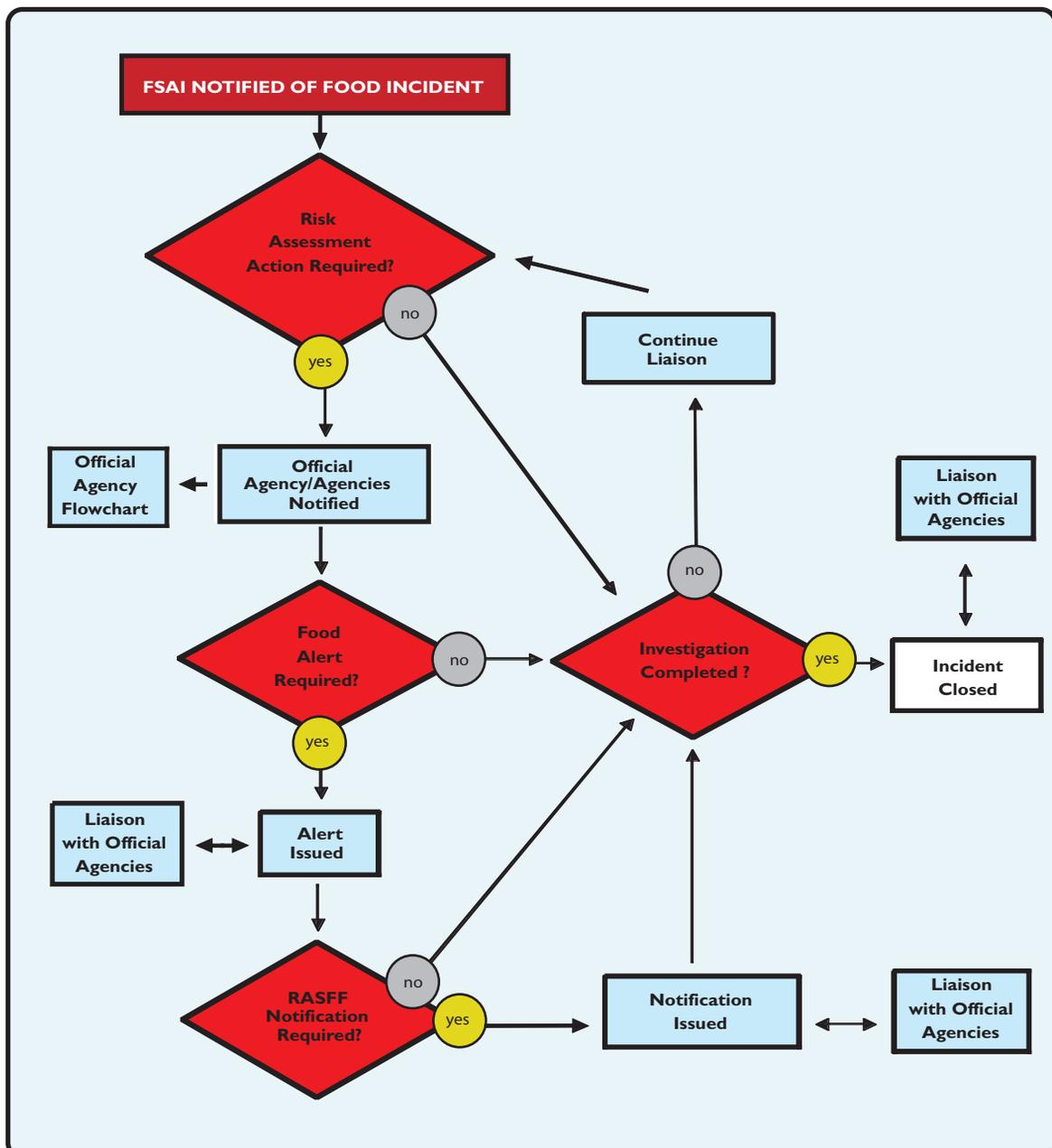
6.2 Role of the FSAI

Depending on the particular incident the FSAI will be able to:

- Provide enforcement support
- Act as a central contact point for gathering and issuing information
- Act as an information resource and point of contact for scientific expertise in dealing with an incident
- Issue Food Alert and RASFF notifications
- Notify and update official agencies
- Provide necessary briefings to other professionals, government departments, officials and the media.

The FSAI will also be able to contribute significantly to the risk analysis process.

Flow chart 2: FSAI summarises the process associated with this role



6.3 Role of Food Business Operators

Food business operators should be aware of the legal obligations set out in Regulation 178/2002 regarding food recall notifications and maintenance of food recall and traceability systems. These provisions will apply from 1 January, 2005.

Article 17 states:

Food and feed business operators at all stages of production, processing and distribution within the businesses under their control shall ensure that foods or feeds satisfy the requirements of food law which are relevant to their activities and shall verify that such requirements are met.

Article 19 sets out detailed responsibilities for food business operators:

- 1. If a food business operator considers or has reason to believe that a food which it has imported, produced, processed, manufactured or distributed is not in compliance with the food safety requirements, it shall immediately initiate procedures to withdraw the food in question from the market where the food has left the immediate control of that initial food business operator and inform the competent authorities thereof. Where the product may have reached the consumer, the operator shall effectively and accurately inform the consumers of the reason for its withdrawal, and if necessary, recall from consumers products already supplied to them when other measures are not sufficient to achieve a high level of health protection.*
- 2. A food business operator responsible for retail or distribution activities which do not affect the packaging, labelling, safety or integrity of the food shall, within the limits of its respective activities, initiate procedures to withdraw from the market products not in compliance with the food-safety requirements and shall participate in contributing to the safety of the food by passing on relevant information necessary to trace a food, cooperating in the action taken by producers, processors, manufacturers and/or the competent authorities.*
- 3. A food business operator shall immediately inform the competent authorities if it considers or has reason to believe that a food which it has placed on the market may be injurious to human health. Operators shall inform the competent authorities of the action taken to prevent risks to the final consumer and shall not prevent or discourage any person from cooperating, in accordance with national law and legal practice, with the competent authorities, where this may prevent, reduce or eliminate a risk arising from a food.*
- 4. Food business operators shall collaborate with the competent authorities on action taken to avoid or reduce risks posed by a food which they supply or have supplied.*

In addition, various existing Statutory Instruments outline offences for selling food which does not comply with specific regulatory controls. Some also provide authorised officers with various powers to seize, detain, withdraw from the market and destroy foods which do not comply with the relevant legislation.

These include:

- Sale of Food and Drugs Acts, 1875-1936
- Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act, 1998
- European Communities (Official Control of Foodstuff) Regulations, 1998
- European Communities (Labelling, Advertising and Presentation of Food) Regulations, 2002
- European Communities (Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs) Regulations, 2001

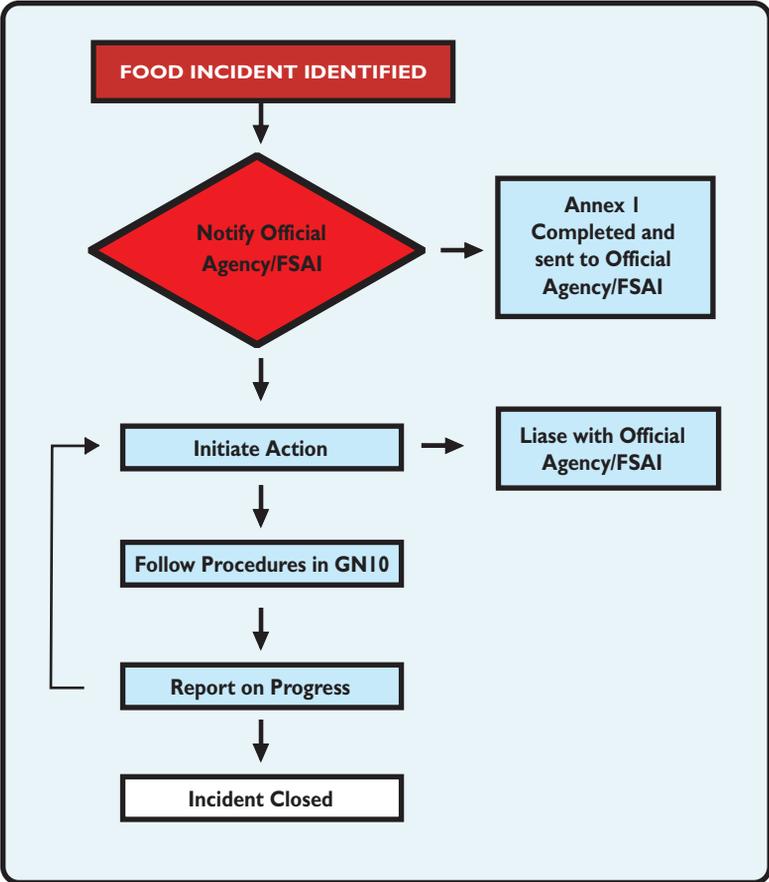
Other specific legislation (such as those on additives) and emergency measures taken by the Commission under Article 53 of Regulation 178/2002 may also contain similar provisions.

Therefore food businesses shall:

- Take all necessary measures to protect public health.
- Maintain and test an effective and efficient recall and traceability system.
- Maintain all process documentation and product testing and traceability documentation.
- Notify the relevant official agencies and/or the FSAI of incidents or potential incidents without delay¹.
- Initiate the withdrawal and/or recall of products as necessary.
- Provide all necessary assistance and co-operation to an investigating agency.
- Ensure timely release of information relevant to an investigation.
- Review and update information as it becomes available and ensure investigating agencies are notified during incidents.
- Prevent the sale of food which does not comply with the provision of any regulation applicable to that particular food.

¹ Where a legal requirement under a specific Statutory Instrument exists to notify a specific official agency/ministry, the relevant provisions must be followed.

Flow chart 3: Food business summarises the process associated with this role



6.4 Planning and Co-ordination

Official agencies will have arrangements or procedures in place to deal with the receipt of incident notifications and will investigate accordingly.

An investigating agency will be responsible for identifying the hazard, assessing the risk and deciding upon and initiating the appropriate course of action.

Incidents should be dealt with using the principles of risk analysis. In order to categorise incidents for management purposes, consideration will be given to the health impact posed and to the scale and nature of the food distribution.

In deciding where the responsibility for managing an incident lies the hazard characterisation and distribution of food associated with the incident can be used as a guide.

The **hazard characterisation** can be classified as High, Medium or Low

High – where the adverse health affects are likely to be severe and immediate (e.g. <i>E. coli</i> O157, <i>Cl. botulinum</i> , acutely toxic and caustic chemicals, presence of allergens)
Medium – where the health affects are likely to be less serious or relate to continuous long-term exposure or consumption of large quantities of food (e.g. chemical contaminants such as PAHs)
Low – where the health effects are minimal or not observable (e.g. chemical residue levels which are above statutory limits but which do not pose a health risk or foreign object contamination)

The **distribution of the food** can be considered in the context of the enforcement remit of the investigating agencies and classified as ‘Limited’ or ‘Wide’ distribution.

Limited distribution – where the food is distributed in a localised area under the responsibility of one official agency (such as a bakery operating within the boundary of one health board) or the distribution is confined to one sector under the responsibility of one official agency (such as shellfish consigned to various dispatch centres all under control of the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources).

Wide distribution – where the food is distributed such that more than one official agency has responsibility or where food has been distributed outside the State. In considering where the responsibility for managing an incident lies, the following outline should be used:

Distribution	Hazard Characteristic	Management
Limited	Low	Investigating agency
	Medium	Investigating agency in collaboration with the FSAI as necessary
	High	Investigating agency in collaboration with the FSAI
Wide	Low	Investigating agency
	Medium	Investigating agency in collaboration with the FSAI as necessary
	High	FSAI in collaboration with investigating agency

The responsibility for carrying out investigation and liaison at local level will be with the investigating agency. Such an agency may request assistance from the FSAI regardless of the risk or distribution associated with any incident.

Where there is necessary collaboration with the FSAI in managing an incident, investigations will continue to be carried out by the investigating agency with support from the FSAI.

In many cases, an investigating agency may not be aware of the full nature of the distribution or risk when initially investigating a food incident. Agencies are encouraged to use the 'precautionary principle' approach. If during the course of investigation, officers believe that there are wider implications than the evidence suggests they should notify the FSAI of the circumstances at the initial phase of the investigation. As much detail as possible should be provided and updates be made available as necessary in the manner outlined below. An investigating agency may need to re-categorise the incident on the basis of information as it becomes available.

6.4.1 Immediate notifications to the FSAI

Any distribution of food to other Member States will necessitate the notification of the Commission through the RASFF and it is therefore necessary, even in investigating low-risk incidents, that official agencies notify such distribution immediately to the FSAI.

In addition, high hazard characterisation incidents (*E. coli* O157 and *Cl. botulinum*, etc) should also be notified immediately.

6.5 Risk Analysis

The risk analysis approach to reducing, eliminating or avoiding risk to health provides a systematic methodology for the determination of effective proportionate and targeted measures or other actions to protect health and consists of the three components of risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.

The investigating agency with responsibility for managing an incident will need to take into account the results of a risk assessment when deciding on appropriate action.

In carrying out the risk assessment, the Codex Alimentarius (as set out in Regulation 178/2002) will be followed, which consists of hazard identification, hazard categorisation, exposure assessment and risk categorisation.

1. **Hazard Identification:** the identification of known or potential health effects associated with a particular agent.
2. **Hazard Characterisation:** the qualitative or quantitative evaluation of the nature of the adverse effect associated with the hazard.
3. **Exposure Assessment:** the qualitative or quantitative evaluation of the degree of intake likely to occur.
4. **Risk Characterisation:** the integration of hazard identification and exposure assessment into an estimate of the risk and its associated uncertainties.

7. NOTIFICATIONS

A template for notifications is included at Annex 1, which should be used for notification of any incident to the FSAI.

Notifications of incidents should be sent by e-mail to: rapidalert@fsai.ie, detailing as much relevant information as is known. Contact details must be provided, including out of hours contact as necessary.

It is essential that prior to sending a notification to the Authority a telephone call be made to the FSAI Rapid Alert Team to advise that such a notification is being sent in order to ensure receipt.

The FSAI will circulate details of key contacts and telephone numbers for this purpose and provide regular updates on any changes.

7.1 Out of Hours Arrangements

The FSAI operates an emergency out of hours telephone line (01) 817 1313. Where information is being sent to the rapid alert e-mail address outside of normal working hours, a call to the out of hours number, advising of the fact, should precede the information.

The service contracts with official agencies make provision for out of hours emergency/on-call services. Where these exist, the arrangements should be notified to the FSAI.

8. MALICIOUS TAMPERING/INTENTIONAL CONTAMINATION OF FOOD

Malicious tampering and intentional contamination of food is a criminal offence and is a matter under the remit of the Garda Síochána National Bureau of Criminal Investigation (NBCI). The FSAI has a working arrangement with the NBCI on investigating such matters.

Investigating agencies which become aware of an incident which may be the result of malicious tampering and/or intentional contamination of food should notify the FSAI immediately.

9. COMMUNICATIONS

Food distribution follows a complicated network and in many cases, food will come under the responsibility of more than one official agency through the distribution chain in Ireland.

In addition, food produced in Ireland is exported and food from other Member States and other countries is imported into Ireland. The FSAI will ensure there are suitable communication systems and arrangements in place to exchange such information within Ireland and with other countries.

This includes:

- Operation of the Rapid Alert System For Food in Ireland
- Provision of a protocol for sharing such information with the Food Standards Agency (Northern Ireland) on cross-border distributions
- Provision of a protocol for investigating incidents under the 'Single Liaison' arrangements of Official Feed and Food Controls (currently Directive 93/99/EEC)
- Acting as the central contact point for exchanging such information to third countries.

There is a need for official agencies, industry groups and food businesses to have their own communications structures and protocols in place, which must include the maintenance of key contacts lists.

9.1 Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) Notifications

The European Regulation 178/2002 provides for a rapid alert system network for the notification of incidents between Member States of direct or indirect risk to human health deriving from food or feedstuffs. The system is referred to as the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). The European Commission manages the system.

The FSAI acts as the contact point for receipt of Rapid Alert notifications issued by the European Commission (in relation to food) and is the contact point for notifying the Commission of any action initiated in Ireland to control a food hazard.

RASFF notifications (alerts and information exchanges) are received by the FSAI on a daily basis and all are assessed for possible implications for Ireland. The basis for the assessment includes:

- Known distribution of the food to Ireland
- Possible distribution of food to Ireland from another country known to have received the food
- The type of food
- The possible uses for the food (e.g. direct retail sale or as an ingredient in processing)
- The nature of the risk
- Other potential implications for consumers.

Where the implications are unclear, the FSAI will consult with appropriate food business representatives, official agencies and other experts in order to inform on the correct course of action.

Where the FSAI consults directly with food business operators the relevant official agency will also be informed.

The FSAI will notify the Commission of any measure taken to restrict the placing on the market or of withdrawal or recall from the market of food in order to protect public health and which requires rapid action.

Rejection, related to a direct or indirect risk to human health, of a batch, container or cargo of food at a BIP will also be notified through the RASFF. There are separate arrangements in place for these types of notifications.

Where an official agency is aware of the need to notify the Commission of, for example, an incident or of results of testing, it is important that as many of the relevant details should be forwarded to the Rapid Alert Team as described in Section 4.

Once details have been checked and the notification sent to the Commission, it will be copied to the originator by way of confirmation. This will normally be done within one working day of receipt.

9.2 Food Alerts

The FSAI may become aware of a food hazard through food related illness, RASFF notifications, directly from a food producer in Ireland, any of the official agencies, food control laboratories or any other source. Where there is a need for action to be taken or to convey the information to the wider enforcement and food business community, the FSAI will issue a national Food Alert.

The Food Alert notification will be issued to all enforcement agencies. The alert will also be sent to public health representatives, food business representatives, and other interested groups and organisations who have requested to be on the circulation list.

While notifications will also be sent by fax where requested, e-mail will be considered as the normal means of communication.

As a supplement to the e-mail notification, contacts will also have the option of receiving SMS text messages issued by the FSAI to inform recipients of the issue of an alert.

Once issued, all Food Alerts will be placed on the FSAI website: www.fsai.ie.

The Food Alert will be in a standard form, identified with a unique, sequential number relating to the year of issue (see example in Annex 2).

Food Alerts will be issued in one of two categories:

Category I (For Action) - Will be used where there is an identified risk to consumers and action is required to be taken. Ensuring the removal from sale at retail premises of a food identified with a high pathogenic bacterial loading is an example of the type of alert which would fall in this category.

The detail contained in the alert will clearly set out what is known about the food (including batch/production codes, size of containers, quantities affected, durability dates, etc), the nature of the hazard and the risk along with what specific action is required. This will enable official agencies and food businesses to act in an appropriate, consistent and co-ordinated manner to control the risk.

Official agencies will be provided with direction on the level of response and enforcement required and any other action to be carried out.

Category II (For Information) – Will be used for passing on information relating to food safety, but not detailing or requiring any action to be taken. Where a product recall has been initiated by a food producer and there is no further action being required, would be an example of such a notification.

Category II Alerts are a means of making enforcement offices and food business representatives aware of food safety issues where there may be, for example, enquiries from the public or trade organisations on a particular food safety matter.

The detail provided in the alerts will very much depend on the specific issue being dealt with.

The decision to issue a Food Alert will be taken in view of the nature and details known about the hazard and risk. Where an incident has been notified to the FSAI by an official agency the decision to issue an alert will be taken in consultation with the agency and will include summary details of any action which has already been undertaken.

9.3 Media Management

9.3.1 Incidents managed by official agencies

The investigating agency may issue a local press statement to inform the general public about an incident. Prior to identifying or naming a food business or branded food to the media, the matter should be discussed with the relevant business. A copy of the press statement should be sent to the FSAI, for information. If the need arises, the FSAI can provide a support role to the investigating agency on their request. A nominated spokesperson should be clearly identified for each incident.

9.3.2 Incidents managed by official agencies in collaboration with the FSAI

An investigating agency should consult with the FSAI prior to issuing a press release, where there is collaboration on the management of an incident. The responsibility for issuing this press release will remain with the investigating agency, with input from the FSAI. Where the FSAI considers it necessary to issue a press release, this will be carried out in consultation with the official agency and a copy of the release provided to that agency.

A nominated spokesperson should be identified by the official agency and where appropriate the FSAI may also nominate a spokesperson.

9.3.3 Incidents managed by the FSAI

Where the FSAI is leading the management of a food incident in collaboration with one or more official agencies, the issue of press releases and statements to the media will be managed by the FSAI with input from the investigating agency/agencies. Copies of releases and statements will be provided to the official agencies concerned.

The FSAI will nominate a spokesperson in relation to all communications with the media concerning the incident.

Food business operators issuing press releases, public notices and/or recall or withdrawal notifications should provide copies to the relevant official agency or the FSAI, along with contact details of any nominated spokespersons.

10. INCIDENT CLOSURE

Once investigations into an incident have been completed or all possible action has been carried out to ensure food products have been recalled or withdrawn, it is recommended good practice to notify all parties involved that the incident is closed, whether the action has been initiated by a food business operator, official agency or the FSAI.

A summary record of the outcome should be made for reference purposes and in the case of food withdrawals/recalls, details of quantities returned/destroyed should be identified.

PART 2: SINGLE LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS

11. 'SINGLE LIAISON' ARRANGEMENTS AND THIRD COUNTRY NOTIFICATIONS

The European Communities (Official Control of Foodstuffs) Regulations, 1998 give effect to Directives 89/397/EEC and 93/99/EC on the official control arrangements for inspection, sampling, analysis and control of foodstuffs.

Directive 93/99 (transposed as Regulations 23-25) sets out the additional measures to the controls which includes a framework for the interaction between the competent authorities of the Member States and the provision of administrative assistance in applying the official control measures (which includes the investigation of food complaints). Each Member State has designated a 'single liaison body' to act as a contact point to assist and coordinate communication and, in particular, the transmission and reception of requests for assistance between it and other Member States. In Ireland, the FSAI acts as this contact point under the direction of the Department of Health and Children.

(From January 2006, the provisions of Directive 93/99/EC will be superseded by similar arrangements in Regulation (EC) 882/2004 on Official Controls, under Title IV: Administrative Assistance and Cooperation in the areas of Feed and Food, Articles 34-40)

The arrangements do not preclude direct contact between official agencies and officials in other Member States, but where there is such contact, the FSAI should be informed concerning the nature of the contact.

11.1 Matters Referred to Other Member States

As a result of consumer complaints, sampling and inspection, official agencies may find investigations being carried out on food produced in other Member States. It would be appropriate in such circumstances to refer the matter to the competent authority in that member state for information and action.

The FSAI will be able to identify the appropriate contact point in the country of origin where such referrals can be directed.

In forwarding such information, it would be reasonable to request any relevant details about the conditions of manufacture, distribution etc. of the product which could assist in the local investigation. Details of the outcome of any investigation and follow-up action can also be reasonably requested.

As much detail as is known about the food, as detailed in Annex 1, should be forwarded with the enquiry in addition to any laboratory report or other supplementary information identifying the nature of the problem identified. Where labels or photographs of the product are available, these (or copies) can also be forwarded as they may be able to assist in the investigation.

Acting on behalf of the official agency, the FSAI will be able to forward all details and requests about such matters to the designated 'single liaison' contact point and follow up the status of such referrals where necessary.

11.2 Referrals from Other Member States

Where a request for assistance is received from another Member State, the FSAI will refer the matter to the appropriate official agency.

The official agency receiving such requests will be responsible for providing such information that has been reasonably requested and the information shall be forwarded without delay (unless it is the subject of legal proceedings). The Regulations refer to providing information 'without undue delay' and it is recommended that as part of good practice, such requests should be dealt with within 28 days.

The information to be relayed to the requesting authority can be sent either directly or through the FSAI. Where information is sent directly, a copy should also be sent to the FSAI.

In dealing with the request, if it becomes apparent that there has been a breach of food safety legislation, appropriate action will be taken by the official agency.

All information provided, in whatever form, is covered by professional secrecy and where another Member State has rules permitting free access by persons to information held, this will be stated at the time of requesting the information.

11.3 Third Country Investigations

While not covered in the Official Control Directives, similar arrangements may apply where food has been exported to, or imported from, a country outside the EU.

For assistance with investigations involving third countries, the FSAI should be contacted.

ANNEX I: FSAI INCIDENT REPORT FORM

FSAI INCIDENT REPORT FORM NOTIFICATION OF FOOD INCIDENT

REPORTED BY:

Position:.....
Organisation:.....
Address:.....
DirectTel.No:.....
OutofHours:.....
FaxNo:.....
E-mail:.....

DATE/TIME OF REPORT:

SECTION 1 – DETAILS OF HAZARD

PRODUCT IDENTIFICATION:

(Please supply as much information as is known)

FoodType:.....
BrandName:.....
NatureoftheHazard:.....

Chemical	Microbiological	Foreign Object

Manufacturer:.....
CountryofOrigin:.....
Retailer/Distributor:.....
Lot/BatchNumber:.....
IdentificationMarks/Stamps/PremisesApprovalNumber:.....

Quantity of Food Involved:.....

Details of Packaging (pack size, type etc):.....

Date of Production:.....

Durability Details ('Use-by'/'Best-before'):.....

Known Distribution:.....

Importer:.....

Commercial Document Details (if imported):.....

Wherever possible, a picture or label copy should also be provided.

SECTION 2 – DETAILS OF INVESTIGATION

Date of hazard identified:.....

How hazard was identified:.....

Known illness related to consumption:.....

Details of any investigation:.....

Contact with other agencies/organisations:.....
(Details of individuals, contact numbers etc)

SECTION 3 – OTHER INFORMATION

Any other details known about the incident:.....

.....
Once completed, the form should be emailed to rapidalert@fsai.ie

Or faxed to 'Rapid Alert', FSAI on 01 817 1301

For out of hours notification, phone 01 817 1313 and advise information is being sent.

ANNEX 2: EXAMPLE OF ALERT NOTIFICATION

ALERT NOTIFICATION 2001.028

Category I : For Action

Antibiotic residues in Royal Jelly Capsules

Notifying Country	Germany
Country of Origin	Italy
Product	Natural Goodness Royal Jelly Capsules
Product Description	45 x 500mg capsules Food supplement on the basis of Royal Jelly
Manufacturer	Good4U Food Supplements, Cathedral St, Rome
Minimum Durability Date	End 11/2004
Lot No.	345245-04B
Importer	Marcel & Detroit, D-90675, Hamburg, Germany

Message

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland advises that the above brand of Royal Jelly Capsules should be withdrawn from the market due to the presence of the antibiotic residues Chloramphenicol and Streptomycin.

Chloramphenicol and Streptomycin are antibiotics used in human medicine. The levels present in the capsules pose a very low risk to consumers and it is not considered to be of public health significance. However these residues are not permitted in Royal Jelly, so as a precautionary measure the affected lots should be withdrawn. Consignments of the implicated products have been dispatched to Ireland from Germany, some of which have already been supplied to the health trade.

No other products from these manufacturers or importers are affected in any way. Only the products detailed above are the subject of the notice.

Nature of Danger

Presence of the antibiotic residues Chloramphenicol and Streptomycin which are not permitted in Royal Jelly

Action Requested

Retailers/Wholesalers are requested to remove these products from shelves

EHOs are requested during the course of routine inspections to ensure that these products are removed from sale

Joe Specialist

Consumer Protection Division

1st April, 2001

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Food Safety Authority of Ireland
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