

**Who Does What  
In  
Food Safety**

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## INTRODUCTION

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As consumers, we should be interested in knowing what control measures are in place to safeguard the wholesomeness of the food we eat.

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland was established in 1996 to provide reassurance on food safety to consumers of food in Ireland and to consumers of Irish food abroad by ensuring that the best food safety and hygiene practices are observed in Ireland.

This guide aims to synthesise for the information of consumers, "Who Does What" in the implementation of food safety controls in Ireland at the present time.

For the purposes of this guide, "Food" is defined as: -

- "Any substance used for food or drink by man and;
- (a) any substance which enters into or is used in the composition or preparation of human food and;
  - (b) substance which enters into or is used in the composition or preparation of any substance aforesaid, and
  - (c) chewing gum and products of similar composition."

(Food Safety Authority of Ireland (Establishment) Order, 1997)

For reference:

In this document, a Local Authority refers to...

27 County Councils, 5 County Borough Corporations, 7 Borough Corporations, 49 Urban District Councils and 29 Boards of Town Commissioners.

## **ANIMALS ON THE FARM**

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### **Law**

The Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes Act, 1984 and the Diseases of Animals Act, 1966 provide for animals on the farm. Implementation of these regulations ensures that bovine animals are seen at least once annually by a veterinary surgeon. In addition, the Animals Remedies Act, 1993 and Regulations made there under are very specific; certain drugs may only be prescribed by a registered veterinary surgeon and then only to animals under his/her care.

### **Practice**

Along with annual bovine TB and Brucellosis testing, the Department of Agriculture and Food also carries out additional TB and Brucellosis tests on a targeted random sample of cattle. These tests are either carried out by private veterinary practitioners or by veterinarians from the Department of Agriculture and Food.

In accordance with the Animals Remedies Act, 1993, the Department of Agriculture and Food has set up a Special Investigation Unit which ensures that no illegal substances are being fed/administered to the animals on the farm. This unit can carry out testing on any farm where there may be suspicion of illegal substance use in cattle.

The Department of Agriculture and Food conduct an annual survey for various diseases in sheep on a statistically representative sample of flocks throughout the country.

## **General**

All cattle are identified by means of specific individual ear tags that are issued under the control of the Department of Agriculture and Food. Farmers must register the birth of a calf within 7 days. The Department then issues an identity document (cattle passport) which always travels with the animal until slaughter or export.

European Communities (Registration of Holdings and Identification of Animals) Regulations, 1996 (S.I. No. 1 of 1996) provide for the identification of goats, pigs and sheep. In accordance with these Regulations, all animals must be identified when they are moving to or from premises and they must be accompanied by a document during such movement.

The National Beef Assurance Scheme, currently being developed in the Department of Agriculture and Food, is addressing the issues of:

1. standards at each step of beef production
2. registration of every premises involved in beef production
3. provision of an effective animal identification and tracing system.

## DAIRY

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### Law

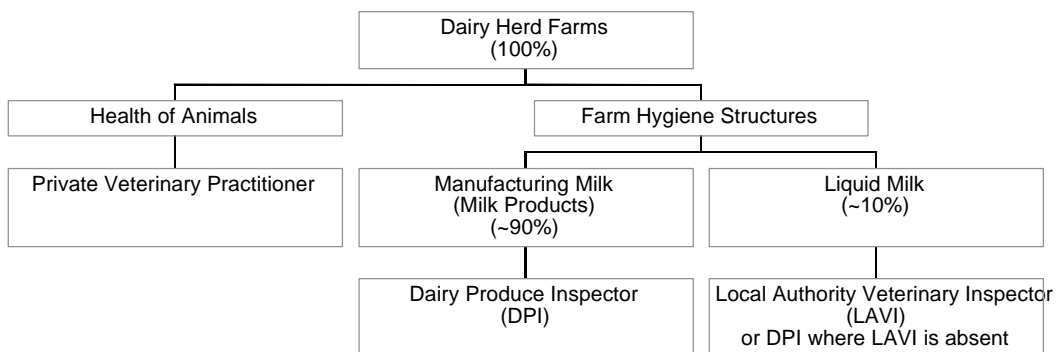
All milk is now subject to the provisions of 92/46/EC (S.I. No.9 of 1996). European Communities (Hygienic Production and Placing on the Market of Raw Milk, Heat-treated Milk and Milk Based Products) Regulations, 1996. These Regulations provide for structural requirements of dairy farms, specific veterinary certification of dairy herds, hygiene conditions and end product specification (certain safety parameters) at milk processing establishments.

### Practice

At both farm and factory level, the milk industry is divided into two sectors:

1. Liquid Milk
2. Manufacturing Milk (Milk Products)

These are under the control of the Veterinary Inspectorate and the Dairy Produce Inspectorate of the Department of Agriculture and Food respectively, and the structure is outlined below:



All dairy farms are registered and must meet structural hygiene requirements. All dairy herds must be inspected and certified annually by a private veterinary practitioner and this certificate must be delivered to the milk processing factories. Where certification cannot be issued, details are referred to the local District Veterinary Office (DVO) of the Department of Agriculture and Food who then re-inspect the herd. Raw milk (i.e. unpasteurised), liquid milk and milk products are officially sampled and tested at dairy science and veterinary laboratories. There is a range of testing carried out including microbiological, antibiotics and other residue testing.

#### **- Liquid Milk**

As outlined, all suppliers of liquid milk must be registered. This register is maintained by the purchasers of the milk, i.e. co-ops or dairies and also the Department of Agriculture and Food. The farm structural hygiene inspections are performed by the Local Authority Veterinary Inspectorate (VI) or the Dairy Produce Inspectorate where VIs are not present.

#### **Processing**

Milk destined for sale as liquid milk is collected from farms and transported in tankers to pasteurisation plants. The 34 approved liquid milk processing factories are controlled by the Veterinary Inspectorate (of the Department of Agriculture and Food) who are responsible for the structural and procedural hygiene at the factories and the raw milk and end product specification.

#### **Retail**

Once milk is pasteurised and packaged in dairies, it is transported by delivery vans to retail outlets. All shops that sell milk should be registered as dairies by the local authorities and an annual licence issued. However, there is little enforcement of these regulations nationally. Only pasteurised milk may be sold to the public. It is illegal to sell unpasteurised milk.

**- Milk Products (Manufacturing Milk)**

Control of milk that is produced for the sole purpose of manufacturing is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture and Food and the Regulations are implemented by Dairy Produce Inspectors (DPIs). The DPIs inspect and monitor farm structures and the structural and procedural hygiene conditions at the factories, as well as raw milk and the end product specifications. Samples are taken and tested regularly.

## POULTRY

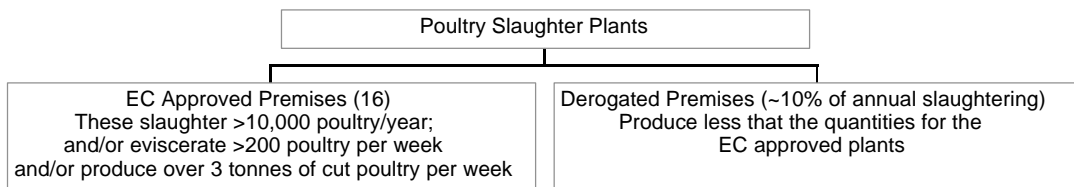
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### Law

Directive 71/118 as amended by Directive 92/116 and implemented by S.I. No. 3 of 1996 lays down the health rules for the production and placing on the market of fresh poultry meat. The Department of Agriculture and Food is the competent authority.

### Practice

There are two types of poultry slaughter houses in Ireland:



### 1. EC Approved Premises

There are 16 EC approved poultry slaughter plants and 12 of these are also approved as cutting premises. In these approved premises, a number of public health conditions apply:

Ante-mortem inspections are required to prevent unfit poultry from being slaughtered. Two ante-mortem options are utilised in Ireland:

1. The flock production data must be presented to the Veterinary Inspector present at the slaughter plant within 72 hours of slaughter. In addition, the Veterinary Inspector from the District Veterinary Office visits the farm annually to inspect records and poultry (accounts for ~70 million poultry per year).

2. A veterinary ante-mortem is carried out at the slaughter premise – this is used for spent hens and poultry from farms producing less than 20,000 poultry per year (accounts for ~2 million poultry per year).

Post-mortem inspection:

- ⇒ An official veterinarian must be present during slaughter
- ⇒ A post-mortem inspection can be performed by Veterinary Inspectors, and / or by trained auxiliaries. Both veterinarians and auxiliaries are employed directly by the Department of Agriculture and Food.

General and specific structural conditions for approval including layout, product and room temperatures, water quality, transport and certification along with staff hygiene and amenity requirements.

## **2. Derogated Premises**

This sector accounts for between 3.5 and 7 million poultry per year and amounts to approximately 10% of annual slaughtering. These are derogated under national law and are the responsibility of the Department of Health and Children and the Local Authorities Veterinary Sections.

The Zoonosis Directive 92/117/EEC, provides measures for protection against specified zoonosis (diseases transmittable from animals to humans). Under this Directive the breeding stock are routinely officially sampled and tested to control *Salmonella*. This testing is done by the Department of Agriculture and Food's Microbiology Laboratory. When breeding flocks are confirmed positive for either *Salmonella* they are slaughtered. Under the National plan to control *Salmonella* in fowl (approved by the Commission) routine carcass testing is carried out. The national data on the trends and sources of zoonosis including data obtained from the health boards is collected and evaluated and reported to the Commission annually.

## EGGS

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### Law

Directive 94/371/EEC lays down specific public health conditions for the putting on the market of certain types of eggs.

Directive 89/437/EEC, as implemented by S.I. No. 293 of 1991 Regulations, lays down the standard for hygiene and health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of egg products.

Under the Zoonosis Directive (92/117/EEC), Ireland has a national plan for monitoring and controlling salmonella in fowl, implemented by S.I. No.2 of 1996. This includes the monitoring of breeding flocks, commercial laying flocks and broiler carcasses for *Salmonella enteritidis* and *Salmonella typhimurium*.

### Practice

The Department of Agriculture and Food monitors breeding farms and hatcheries monthly, and commercial farms by sampling of environmental dust from the poultry houses-annually. Where *S. enteritidis* or *S. typhimurium* are subsequently confirmed in a breeding farm or in a commercial laying farm, the flock is slaughtered.

When a *Salmonella* outbreak in humans is associated with poultry or eggs and is identified to the Department of Agriculture and Food from a Health Board, an investigation is carried out into the possible source. Appropriate samples are then taken to confirm infection in the flock.

**General**

In accordance with the law outlined above, table eggs must have a maximum “sell-by” and a maximum “best-before” date of 21 days and 28 days respectively. Eggs should also be kept dry, out of direct sunshine and stored and transported at a constant temperature.

The production of eggs, egg products or the packaging of eggs is prohibited except in approved premises and they must meet an end product specification.

## **FISH**

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### **Law**

Directive 91/492/EEC (S.I. No. 147 of 1996) lays down health conditions for the production and placing on the market of live bivalve molluscs which are intended for human consumption or for further processing before consumption.

Directive 91/493/EEC ( S.I. No. 170 of 1996) lays down health conditions for the production and placing on the market of fishery products.

### **Practice**

1. Implementation of S.I. No. 147 of 1996 is jointly enforceable by Fishery Officers of the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources and Environmental Health Officers from the Health Boards. All production areas, purification facilities, processing plants and dispatch centres are classified and approved by the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources and are sampled and inspected by Fishery Officers and Environmental Health Officers.

2. Implementation of S.I. No. 170 of 1996 is also jointly enforceable between Fishery Officers of the Department of the Marine & Natural Resources and Environmental Health Officers of the Health Boards. Fishing vessels, fish landings and fish auctions are the responsibility of the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources and are regularly inspected by Fishery Officers. All laboratories used are either approved by the Department of Health and Children or by the Department of the Marine and Natural and Resources.

## **OTHER FOODS**

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### **- Fruit and Vegetables**

#### **Quality Standards**

##### **Law**

EU Quality Standards have been set for a wide range of fruit and vegetables. Under the provisions of Council Regulation (EC) 2200/96 the holder of products covered by the quality standards adopted may not display such products or offer them for sale, or deliver or market them in any other manner within the Community other than in conformity with those standards. The European Communities (Fruit and Vegetables) Regulations, 1997 (S.I. No. 122 of 1997) supplement the EU Regulations by providing the necessary powers for authorised officers and prescribing penalties for offences.

##### **Practice**

Agricultural Officers of the Department of Agriculture and Food carry out routine inspections of fruit and vegetables at wholesale, retail, import and export level.

#### **Pesticide Control**

##### **Law**

European Communities (Pesticide Residues)(Fruit and Vegetables) Regulations, 1989-1997 and Council Directive 76/895/EEC relate to the fixing of maximum levels of pesticide residues in and on fruit and vegetables.

### **Practice**

The main mechanism for ensuring safety of the consumer is the maximum residue limit (MRL). This is the highest level of residue limit permitted in an individual crop. Each fruit and vegetable sample taken by the Pesticide Control Service of the Department of Agriculture and Food is analysed for 89 different residues. Domestic and imported samples are taken by the Department primarily at wholesale level to ensure traceability.

### **- Cereals**

Cereal Inspectors of the Crop Schemes Group of the Department of Agriculture and Food monitor feedingstuffs and check that pathogens or any toxic substances do not enter the human food chain via feed that is fed to the animals. The Cereals Inspectors examine the quality of cereals and certify them for exportation. They also inspect seed potatoes and assess the quality of cereals, grasses and root crops.

The Pesticide Control Service also takes cereal samples for analysis. Each sample taken is analysed for 76 residues.

## Water And Beverages

### - Water

#### Law

European Communities (Natural Mineral Water) Regulations, 1986 concern the definition of natural mineral water and the conditions for exploitation and marketing thereof. Strict conditions apply before a water can be designated as a “natural mineral” water.

European Communities (Quality of Water intended for Human Consumption) Regulations (S.I. No. 81 of 1988) lays down quality standards for which water intended for human consumption must comply.

#### Practice

The actual classification of water monitoring is complex.

Water Type	Responsibility
Public Drinking Water Supplies	Department of the Environment and Local Government, Environmental Protection Agency and the Local Authorities
Natural Mineral Waters	Department of Agriculture and Food
Water in Food Premises	(a) Department of Agriculture and Food (b) Department of Health and Children via the Health Boards
Bottled Water and all Flavoured Water	Department of Health and Children and the Health Boards

### **General**

The functioning bodies responsible for the production of drinking water, within the Department of the Environment and Local Government are known as 'Sanitary Authorities' and these comprise County and Borough Councils, City Corporations and Urban Districts throughout the country.

### **- Beverages**

Wine, Spirit Drinks, Aromatized Wine Based Drinks, Fruit Juices, Cocoa and Chocolate Products, and Coffee and Chicory products are the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture and Food.

Soft Drinks and the brewing and distilling industries are all the responsibility of the Department of Health and Children.

## **ANIMALS IN TRANSIT**

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### **Law**

The Diseases of Animals (Protection of Animals during Transport) Orders, 1995 and 1997 provide inter alia detailed rules on the watering and feeding intervals, journey times and rest periods for animals during transportation. Similarly the Protection of Animals Act, 1911 sets out steps to take to prevent cruelty to animals.

### **Practice**

In general, animals are transferred from farms to abattoirs where they are slaughtered. The Veterinary Inspector present at the abattoir has the responsibility for conducting ante-mortem examination of the animals including monitoring of the transport used. There are three main ways in which animals are transferred to abattoirs:

- An abattoir buyer actually visits the farm. He/she selects the animals and then directly transfers those animals, in his/her own truck, to the abattoir.
- The selling farmer brings the animals to the abattoir him/herself, often in his/her own truck, or in many cases, in a borrowed or hired vehicle (e.g. a haulier).
- The selling farmer brings the animals to the local mart and the dealers who buy on behalf of the factory, assemble there to purchase. Each of these marts must register according to the Marts Act, 1967. Large numbers of cattle may move from the farm to the mart and may then be housed temporarily in sheds for up to a few days before being brought to the factory or slaughter house. As a prerequisite to registration, all marts must have the facilities to clean and disinfect both transport vehicles and the mart itself.

### **General**

In February 1998, the Department of Agriculture and Food implemented a clean livestock policy. This is a legal requirement which sets out to evaluate the condition of cattle presented for slaughter:

- Cattle are graded from 1-5 on arrival at the factory, depending on the level of faecal contamination present on the hides of the cattle
- Grades 1 and 2 are essentially clean animals
- Grades 3 and 4 require specific handling at the abattoir
- Grade 5 must be rejected and the animal returned to the farm of origin

For the implementation of the Protection of Animals Act, 1911, the Garda Síochana is the Competent Authority. If non-compliance of this Act is observed by the veterinarian, the Gardaí are informed so that action can be taken.

## **ANIMALS AT SLAUGHTER**

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### **Law**

#### **1. Animal Welfare**

European Communities (Protection for Animals at Time of Slaughter) Regulations, 1995 (S.I. No. 114 of 1995) lay down standards for the protection of animals at the time of slaughter. The Regulations set out the rules for the treatment of animals prior to death and for humane methods of slaughtering animals. Persons who slaughter the animals must hold a valid slaughter licence that is issued by the Local Authority.

#### **2. Food Safety**

The Fresh Meat Act, 1930-1935, the Abattoirs Act, 1988 (Veterinary Examination) Regulations, 1992 and the European Communities (Fresh Meat) Regulations, 1997 (S.I. No. 434 of 1997) require constant monitoring of killing, dressing, chilling, cutting up dispatching and packaging of fresh meat. Veterinary personnel are responsible for ensuring that hygiene before, during and after slaughter is such that the consumer is always protected.

### **Practice**

In Ireland, there are two types of slaughter plant:

#### **1. Large Scale Slaughter Plants**

There are approximately 40 of these in the country and they trade both nationally and internationally. These premises must be approved and listed under Directive 91/497/EEC and must also be approved under National Law (Fresh Meat Act, 1930-1935) before they can be operational. They are under permanent supervision of Veterinary Inspectors (VIs) from the Department of Agriculture and Food and full-time Technical Agriculture Officers (TAOs).

The TAOs undertake duties assigned by VIs including live animal ID checks, health marking of meat, routing hygiene inspections, temperature monitoring in chills and boning halls, etc. The Department of Agriculture and Food also employs Temporary Veterinary Inspectors (TVIs) who carry out ante-and post-mortem inspection of the animals.

## **2. Local Abattoirs**

In Ireland there are approximately 445 local abattoirs that trade only on the domestic market. In a “local abattoir” no more than 1,000 livestock units are killed per annum. These abattoirs are controlled and monitored by the Local Authority Veterinary Inspection Service (LAVIS). The LAVIS also deploys TVIs for ante- and post-mortem inspection.

### **General**

Monitoring includes:

1. Correct ante-mortem examination to ensure animals are healthy prior to slaughter.
2. Correct post-mortem examination to ensure meat is fit for consumption.  
(These procedures (1&2) are only carried out by veterinary personnel)
3. Official supervision of all plant activities including structures, fittings, equipment and procedures including documented cleansing and sanitation programmes, vermin control, water sampling, etc.
4. All meat requiring further inspection and/or sampling is maintained under official control.
5. Condemned materials are removed from the food chain.
6. All carcasses and cut meat must meet predetermined temperature levels (7°C for meat and 3°C for offal) which are monitored prior to loading and despatch.
7. In addition, all transport vehicles for meat are subject to routine inspection by the veterinarians present at the plants.

## **MEAT PROCESSING PLANTS**

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### **- Meat Product Plants**

#### **Law**

EC (Meat Products and Other Products of Animal Origin) Regulations, 1995 (S.I. No. 126 of 1995) lay down the procedures for the hygienic production of meat products. Any plant listed under Directive 92/5/EEC is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture and Food.

#### **Practice**

Veterinary Inspectors from the Department of Agriculture and Food officially control meat product plants that produce more than 7.5 tonnes per week. These VIs monitor all aspects of the plant, often in tandem with Technical Agricultural Officers also from the Department.

Random samples of all meat are taken from the plants for analysis of pesticides, growth promoters, hormones, antibiotics, etc. This testing and sampling is carried out at the Central Meat Laboratory, Abbotstown, the State Laboratory and other private laboratories which are approved by the Department of Agriculture and Food.

Meat product plants producing less than the outlined amount are the responsibility of the Department of Health and Children / Health Boards.

### **General**

All meat and meat products being traded in the Community must be accompanied by a health certificate which is issued by a VI from the Department of Agriculture and Food. This certificate guarantees the fitness of the products for human consumption, that the meat was derived from healthy animals, that random samples did not contain residues of substances detrimental to human health and that it was loaded and transported in hygienic conditions.

A manufacturing licence to manufacture each product is required and this is issued by the Department of Agriculture and Food.

### **- Minced Meat and Meat Preparations**

#### **Law**

EC (Minced Meat and Meat Preparations) Regulations, 1996 (S.I. No. 243 of 1996) set standards of hygiene and operation for premises producing minced meat or meat preparations either for the domestic or export market.

These Regulations do not apply to minced meat prepared in retail shops and sold directly to the consumer.

#### **Practice**

The Regulations outlined above prescribe the conditions which must be fulfilled before a plant can be approved, the source of meat to be minced, health marking, composition standards, microbiological criteria and wrapping, packing and storage conditions. VIs from the Department of Agriculture and Food constantly monitors these conditions.

## OTHER FOOD PREMISES

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### Law

European Communities (Hygiene of Foodstuffs) Regulations, 1998 (S.I. No. 86 of 1998) set out statutory requirements in relation to food hygiene and food premises and are currently being updated. They apply essentially to the following sectors of the food industry:

Butcher Shops	Health Centres
Clubs	Hospitals
Colleges	Hotels
Fish Retail Shops	Licensed Premises
Food Distributors	Nursing Homes
Food Manufacturing	Restaurants
Food Processors	Schools
Food Producers	Supermarkets
Food Stalls	Takeaways

Directive 89/397/EEC and the European Communities (Official Control of Foodstuffs) Regulations, 1998 (S.I. No. 85 of 1998) require each country to have a food sampling and inspection programme.

### 1. Inspections

Inspections under the European Communities (Hygiene of Foodstuffs) Regulations, 1998 are carried out by Environmental Health Officers from the Health Boards and Veterinary Inspectors from Local Authorities.

The Official Control of Foodstuffs Regulations place obligations on the Health Boards to control and inspect food and food businesses within their areas. In Ireland, these inspections are carried out by Environmental Health Officers (EHOs).

Premises are divided into three different categories:

- High Risk
- Medium Risk
- Low Risk

Regular inspections are carried out to ensure compliance with the Regulations. If the Inspecting Officer finds the premises is of 'grave and immediate danger to the general public', an application can be made to the Chief Executive Officer of the Health Board to apply to the courts for a closure order.

## **2. Registration**

The following are the food premises that must apply for registration:

### **Premises**

Butcher / Pork Butcher  
Fish Mongers  
Food Manufacturing Premises  
Holiday Camps  
Hotels  
Ice-cream Manufacturers  
Poulterers  
Restaurants  
Take-away Hot Food Premise  
Wholesale Food Premises

The proprietor fills out an application form and sends it, a proposed plan and the relevant amount of money (IR£100 - IR£200) into the Health Board. The premises is then inspected. Registration may be granted, refused, or a provisional registration may be allowed pending compliance with listed requirements.

## **3. Unfit food**

If an Inspecting Officer finds food is "unfit for human consumption", he/she is authorised to seize, remove and detain the food so that it does not remain in the human food chain.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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If you require any additional information, please contact the Food Safety Authority of Ireland at:

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