



Imported food inspection data: January to December 2023

Imported Food Inspection Scheme



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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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Introduction

Foods imported into Australia are subject to the:

- *Biosecurity Act 2015* – which manages biosecurity threats to plant, animals and human health in Australia and its external territories.
- *Imported Food Control Act 1992* (IFC Act) – which manages food safety risks to protect human health.

Under the IFC Act, importers are legally responsible for ensuring the foods they import comply with Australia's food standards and do not pose a risk to human health.

The department monitors the compliance and safety of imported food at the border through the [Imported Food Inspection Scheme](#) (IFIS), a risk-based border inspection program. Foods are referred for inspection and testing under the IFIS based on whether they have been classified as risk or surveillance foods, with risk food, initially, referred at a higher rate than surveillance food. The rate of inspection is decreased or increased depending on a history of compliance.

This report provides summary data from imported food inspections conducted under the IFIS from 1 January to 31 December 2023.

The department also reports monthly the list of foods that have failed analytical testing, found to contain non-permitted additives or ingredients or found to be prohibited plants or fungi. These are published at [Failing food reports - DAFF \(agriculture.gov.au\)](#).

Imported Food Inspection Scheme

Legislation

The IFC Act provides for the department to administer the IFIS, a risk-based border inspection scheme for imported foods. Under this scheme, we monitor food imported into Australia for compliance with Australia's food standards and food safety requirements.

Importers are responsible for ensuring that imported food complies with the IFC Act.

The Imported Food Control Regulations 2019 set out how the IFIS operates, including the rates that foods are referred for inspection.

The Imported Food Control Order 2019 (the Order) lists the foods that are classified as risk and the foods that require certification.

Food classification

Food is classified as **risk food** in the Order based on advice from Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) that the food has the potential to pose a medium or high risk to public health.

FSANZ is an independent statutory authority that develops and maintains the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. FSANZ also provides risk advice on food imported into Australia.

Food that is not classified as risk food is **surveillance food**.

Food may also be imported by a business with a Food Import Compliance Agreement (FICA) which recognises the importer's documented food safety management system that is audited by the department. **Compliance agreement food** is not referred for inspection as risk or surveillance food.

Inspection rates

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 an initial rate of 5% of consignments.

When imported food fails inspection, the importer must take follow-up action such as treatment of the food to bring it into compliance (where applicable), destruction or export. Subsequent imports of the same food (same product, producer and country of origin) are subject to inspection at the rate of 100% of consignments until a history of compliance is demonstrated.

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.

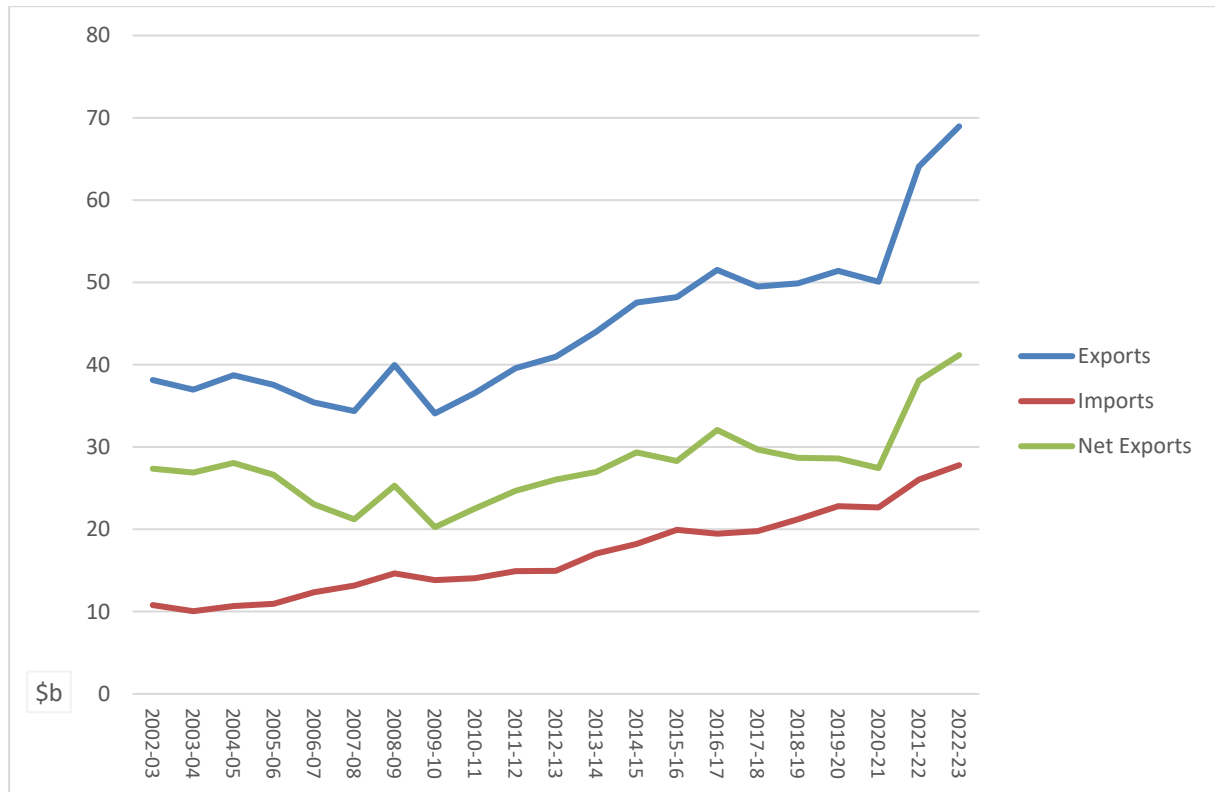
The tests applied to [risk food and surveillance food](#) are published on our website and listed at [Appendix A](#).

Australian food trade

Activity under the IFIS occurs in the context of trade, with more food subject to inspection as imports increase.

Figure 1 graphs the last 20 years of food imports and exports by value and the net value for exports (difference between the value of food exports and food imports) and shows they are continuing to increase in 2022-23.

Figure 1 Australian food trade, by value, 2002-03 to 2022-23

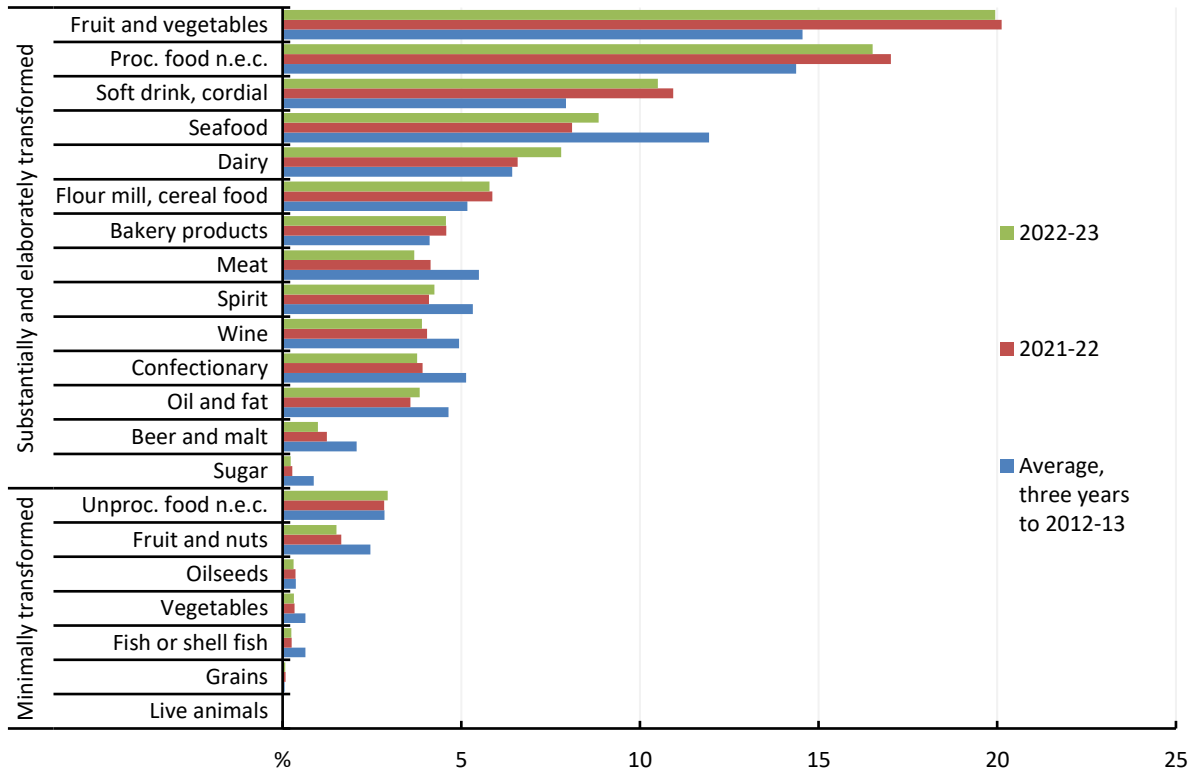


Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Australian food imports

Fruit, vegetables, and processed food continues to represent the highest proportion of food imported into Australia in 2022-23 (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Australian food imports, by commodity, 2021–22, 2022–23 and 3-year average to 2012–13



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

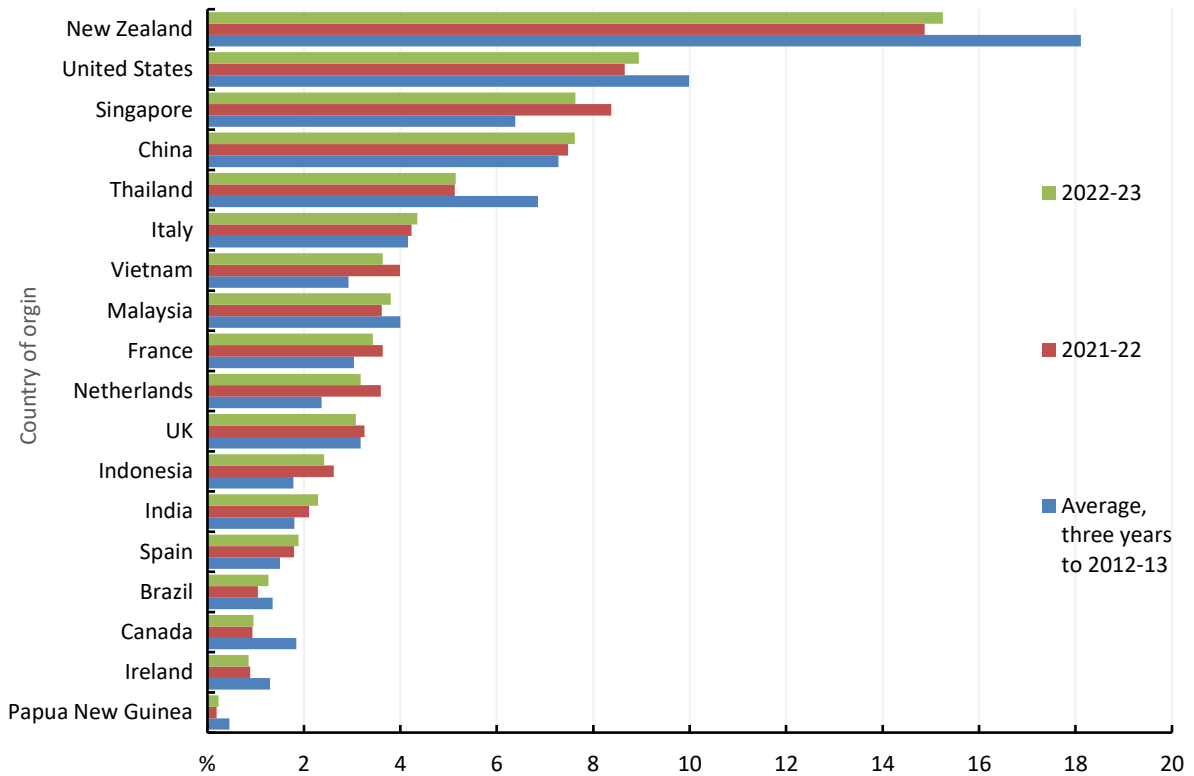
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Source of Australian food imports

The source countries for food imports remained relatively stable over the 10 years to 2023 (Figure 3).

By value, New Zealand and USA remain the top two sources of food imports although trade as a proportion of total imports has declined, with Singapore showing increased trade compared to 10 years ago. The proportion of imports from China remains stable.

Figure 3 Share of imported food, by country of origin, 2021–22, 2022–23 and 3-year average to 2012–13



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

IFIS inspection and testing summary

From 1 January to 31 December 2023, the compliance rate for all food inspected was 98.4%.

During this period:

- 20,691 entries of imported food were referred and subject to inspection or analysis
- 42,620 lines of these entries were inspected. Of these lines
 - 22.4% were risk food
 - 72.3% were surveillance food
 - 5.3% were surveillance food subject to a holding order
- 123,237 tests (including label and visual checks) were conducted on the food, comprising
 - 19,187 analytical tests
 - 51,919 label and composition assessments
 - 52,131 other tests.

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

For an explanation of 'entry' and 'line', see [Glossary](#).

Results of inspection and testing

Compliance rates against all tests conducted

In 2023, 98.4% of all imported foods inspected under the IFIS complied with the test applied (Table 1).

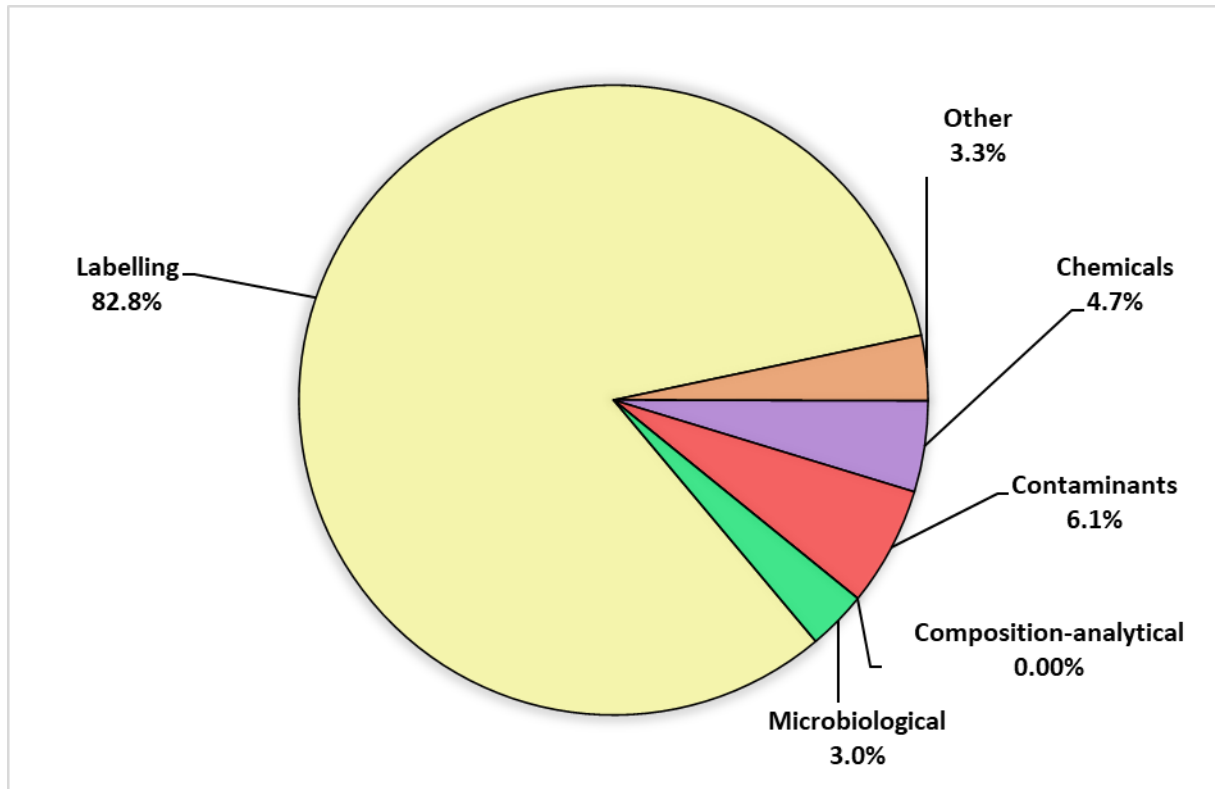
Table 1 All tests, product compliance rates, 2023

Test group	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Labelling	51,919	50,287	1,632	96.9%
Analytical	19,187	18,914	273	98.6%
Other	52,131	52,065	66	99.9%
Total	123,237	121,266	1,971	98.4%

Source: AIMS database

Figure 4 summarises the reasons for non-compliant results (n = 1,971).

Figure 4 Non-compliant results, by type, 2023



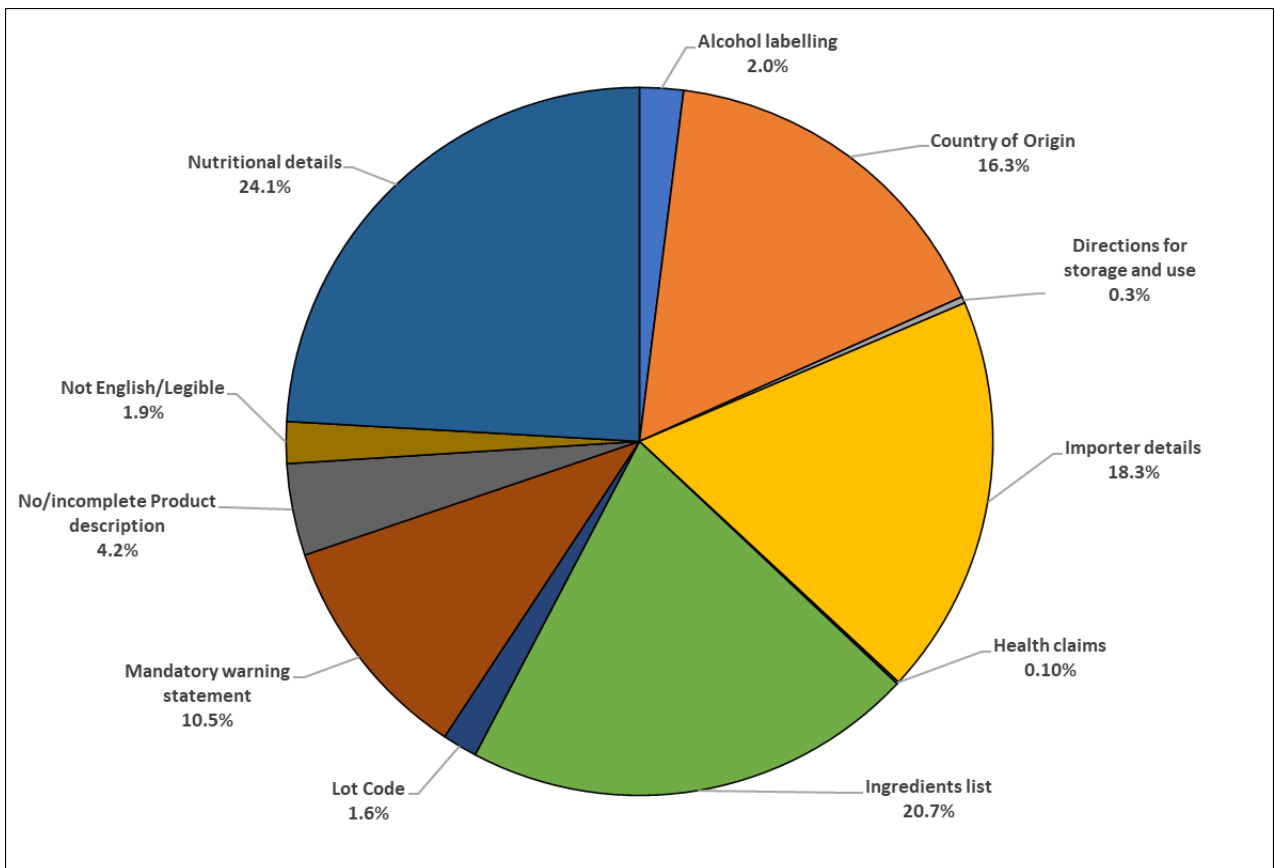
Source: AIMS database

Labelling

In 2023 most non-compliance under the IFIS was for labels that did not comply with Australian food standards (Figure 5). Most notably:

- 24.1% lacked or listed either incomplete or incorrect nutritional details
- 20.7% lacked or listed either incomplete or incorrect ingredient lists
- 18.3% lacked or listed incorrect importer details
- 16.3% were non-compliant with country of origin labelling requirements
- 10.5% were non-compliant with mandatory warning statements.

Figure 5 Non-compliant labelling, by information type, 2023



Source: AIMS database

Virtual label and visual inspections

In 2021, the department introduced the option for virtual label and visual inspections.

Label and visual virtual inspections are conducted remotely in real time using Microsoft Teams to connect a department officer with a food importer or nominated representative. The virtual inspection is equivalent to a physical inspection under the Imported Food Inspection Scheme.

Risk food is not eligible for virtual inspection.

Virtual inspections are only available for surveillance food, excluding:

- formulated supplementary sport foods
- food subject to a holding order
- food subject to analytical testing.

The surveillance foods most often inspected virtually are:

- alcohol for retail sale
- bulk food ingredients such juice concentrates for further processing
- noodles/pasta
- confectionery/tea/coffee
- sauces

2157 virtual inspections were conducted in 2023.

Analytical

Analytical tests conducted under the IFIS are categorised into 4 main types:

- chemical
- composition (analytical assessment)
- contaminant
- microbiological.

More details on tests applied on commodity types are listed in [Appendix A](#).

The number of lines of food referred for inspection under the 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
- test types applied to each sample of that food taken during inspection.

For example, a line of cooked and processed meat product may be referred for inspection under the IFIS. The line contains 2 batches of the product, each with one lot. An officer will take one 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 are taken from this one line of imported food with 2 microbiological tests applied to each sample. This would be reported as one line, with 4 separate test results.

Table 2 shows that, of the 19,187 analytical tests applied in 2023, 98.9% were compliant. Only 273 tests (1.1%) were non-compliant.

Table 2 Analytical tests, compliance rates, 2023

Test type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Chemical	4,751	4,659	92	98.1
Composition	111	111	0	100
Contaminant	7,923	7,802	121	98.5
Microbiological	6,402	6,342	60	99.1
Total	19,187	18,914	273	98.9

Source: AIMS database

Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6 provide more detail on tests applied and the types of food they were applied to.

Table 3 Chemical tests, product compliance rates, 2023

Chemical	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Cannabidiol	Hemp seed and hemp seed products	3	3	0	100
Cephalosporins	Meat	609	609	0	100
Fluoroquinolones	Meat; Farmed fish and prawns	1,146	1,131	15	98.7
Fruit and vegetable residue screen	Fruit and vegetables	1,557	1,485	72	95.4
Malachite green	Farmed fish	319	319	0	100
Nitrofurans	Farmed prawns	187	182	5	97.3
Quinolones	Farmed fish	318	318	0	100
Total THC	Hemp seed and hemp seed product	3	3	0	100
Virginiamycin	Meat	609	609	0	100
Total	–	4,751	4,659	92	98.1

Source: AIMS database

Table 4 Composition analytical test, product compliance rates, 2023

Microbial agent	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Allergen – Dairy	Coconut drinks and coconut powders	8	8	0	100
C4 adulteration	Honey	34	34	0	100
Moisture content	Honey	36	36	0	100
Reducing sugar content	Honey	33	33	0	100
Total	–	111	111	0	100

Source: AIMS database

Table 5 Contaminant tests, product compliance rates, 2023

Contaminant	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Aflatoxins	Nuts	1,424	1,389	35	97.5
Arsenic total	Cereal grains, cereal flours and processed cereals	1,126	1,126	0	100.0
Domoic acid	Bivalve molluscs	535	535	0	100.0
Erucic acid	Edible plant oils	69	69	0	100.0
Histamine	Fish	2,284	2,255	29	98.7
Hydrocyanic acid	Cassava chips	104	61	43	58.7
Inorganic arsenic	Seaweed (hijiki)	27	26	1	96.3
Iodine	Seaweed (brown algae)	260	251	9	96.5
Lead	Cereal grains, cereal flours, processed cereals, fresh and frozen vegetables	1,709	1,706	3	99.8
PSP toxin	Bivalve molluscs	385	384	1	99.7
Total	–	7,923	7,802	121	98.5

Source: AIMS database

Table 6 Microbiological test, product compliance rates, 2023

Microbial agent	Food type	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
<i>Bacillus cereus</i>	Bean curd, tofu	69	67	2	97.1
<i>Cronobacter</i>	Infant formula (0 to 6 months)	9	9	0	100
<i>Coagulase-positive staphylococci</i>	Cooked crustaceans	1	1	0	100
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	Beef products, seafood, cheese, fruit and vegetables	362	355	7	98.1
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	Cheese, ready-to-eat seafood, processed meats	1,756	1,747	9	99.5
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> (enumerated)	Cheese, RTE finfish, slow-cured ham	522	522	0	100.0
<i>Salmonella</i>	Processed meats, seafood, dried coconut, dried paprika, pepper, capsicum and chilli, sesame seeds, cheese, infant formula	3,242	3,205	37	98.9
<i>Vibrio cholerae</i>	Cooked prawns	441	436	5	98.9
Total	–	6,402	6,342	60	99.1

Source: AIMS database

Other checks applied

Apart from analytical testing, other checks are conducted on imported food to verify safety and compliance with the Code. These are listed below.

Composition

The food label is assessed by the officer during the inspection for the presence of ingredients or substances that are either not permitted or in excess of permitted levels. For example: non-permitted colours, added vitamins, prohibited substances.

Visual

A visual assessment of the condition of the food is conducted by the officer during the inspection to determine if the food is potentially unsafe and/or unsuitable. For example: mould growth on food, packaging is damaged or inappropriate, rendering it unfit for human consumption.

Certification

For some high-risk foods, analytical tests are not sufficient to provide assurance the risks have been managed. For these foods, certification is required to verify foodborne hazards of concern are being managed. At the border, the authorised officer will check the certificate meets our requirements.

The foods that require certification and the type of certification required are outlined in the table below.

BSE certificates	Beef and beef products	Provides evidence the products originate in a country with a satisfactory BSE risk status from Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) .
Foreign Government Certificates	Bivalve molluscs, human milk and raw milk cheese	Provides evidence that a country's system for the production and processing of food covered by the application provides equivalent food safety outcomes to Australia's system.
Food Safety Management Certificates	Berries that are ready-to-eat and pomegranate arils that are ready-to-eat	Provides evidence that a food has been produced under a recognised food safety management system based on HAPCCP principles.

Table 7 lists the other checks applied, the number of checks conducted and the compliance rates.

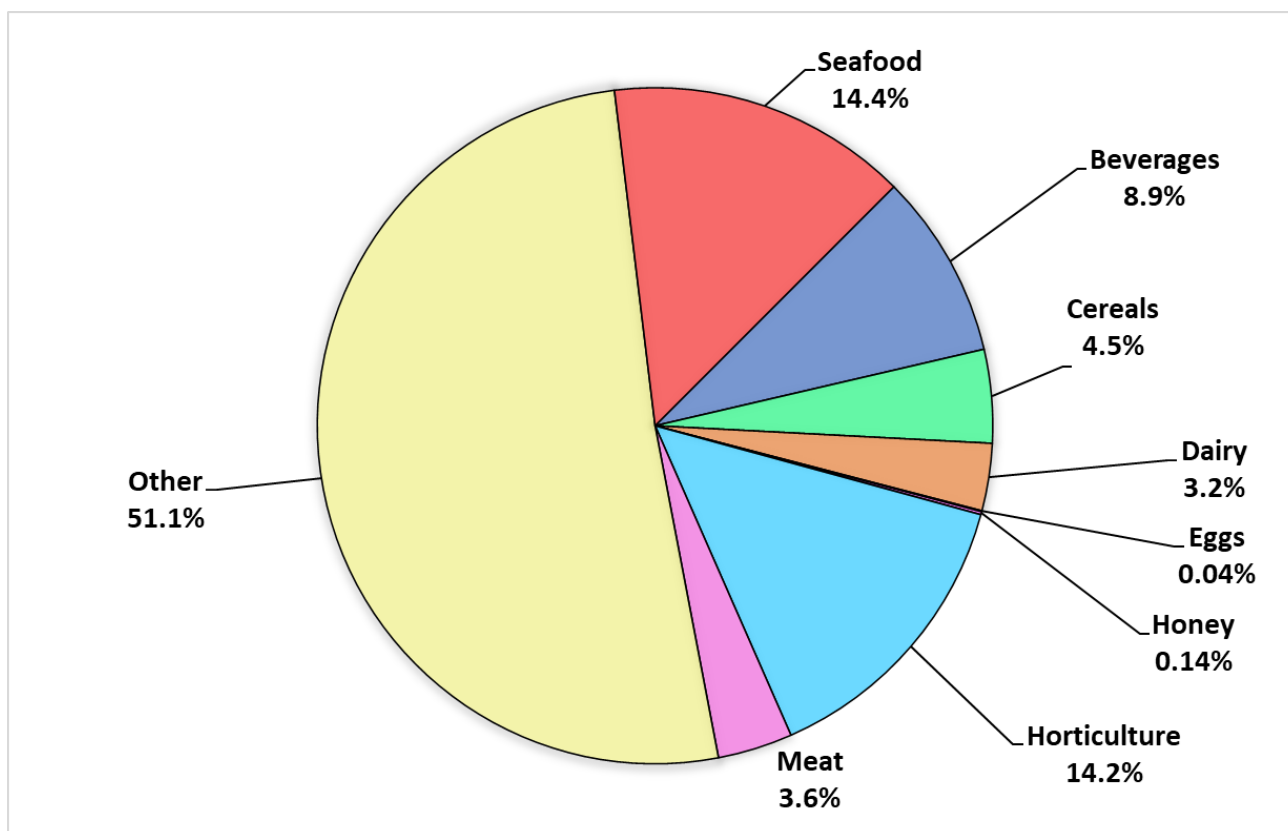
Table 7 Other checks applied, 2023

	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Composition	260	212	48	81.5
Visual	51,049	51,048	1	99.9
BSE Certificates	805	802	3	99.6
Food Safety Management Certificates	1,730	1,728	2	99.9
Foreign Government Certificates (including raw milk cheese)	3,544	3,544		100

Analytical Tests by commodity group

Figure 6 shows (excluding the 'other' category) that Seafood (fresh, chilled, frozen and processed seafood products) was the commodity subject to the most testing (14.4%) in 2023. Horticulture was also subject to high levels of testing (14.2%). This commodity includes fresh and processed fruit and vegetables.

Figure 6 Percentage of tests applied, by commodity group, 2023



Other captures a range of tariff codes, including processed foods such as cereals, canned vegetables, vegetable oils, spices, confectionery, biscuits, coffee and tea.

Source: AIMS database

Results by commodity group

Error! Reference source not found. Table 8 provides the number of tests applied to particular food commodity groups. The results indicate the commodities that are most often tested but are not indicative of the volume of trade in particular commodities.

Commodity groups that contain more risk food or are imported more frequently will have a higher representation under the inspection activity.

[Appendix A](#) provides an overview of the analytical tests applied to the commodity groups.

The commodity group 'other' represents the largest group tested because it captures a range of tariff codes. These include many processed foods such as cereals, canned vegetables, vegetable oils, spices, confectionery, biscuits, coffee and tea.

Table 8 Inspection and test data, by commodity group, 2023

Commodity group	Tests applied (no.)	Compliant (no.)	Non-compliant (no.)	Compliant (%)
Beverages	10,924	10,729	195	98.2
Cereals, flours and milled products	5,500	5,470	30	99.5
Dairy	3,970	3,909	61	98.5
Egg products	54	54	0	100
Honey	177	174	3	98.3
Horticulture	17,464	17,248	216	98.8
Meat	4,416	4,394	22	99.5
Other (incl. processed food) ^a	6,958	6,683	275	96.0
Seafood	17,774	17,605	169	99.0
Total	67,237	66,266	971	98.6

^a Captures a range of tariff codes, including processed foods such as cereals, canned vegetables, vegetable oils, spices, confectionery, biscuits, coffee and tea.

Source: AIMS database

Inspections by country of origin

Under the IFIS, food is referred for inspection based on its risk classification and not 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 number of inspections by country of origin is provided in Table 9. Note that the countries where importers frequently source food will have more lines referred and therefore have a higher representation in inspection data.

Table 9 Number of inspections, by country of origin, 2023

Country of origin	Lines inspected (no.)	Lines inspected (%)
China	6,279	14.7
Japan	3,957	9.3
India	3,928	9.2
Thailand	2,862	6.7
Italy	2,658	6.2
Korea	2,624	6.2
United States of America	1,797	4.2
Vietnam	1,693	4.0
Malaysia	1,413	3.3
Taiwan	1,363	3.2
Other	14,046	33.0
Total	42,620	100.0

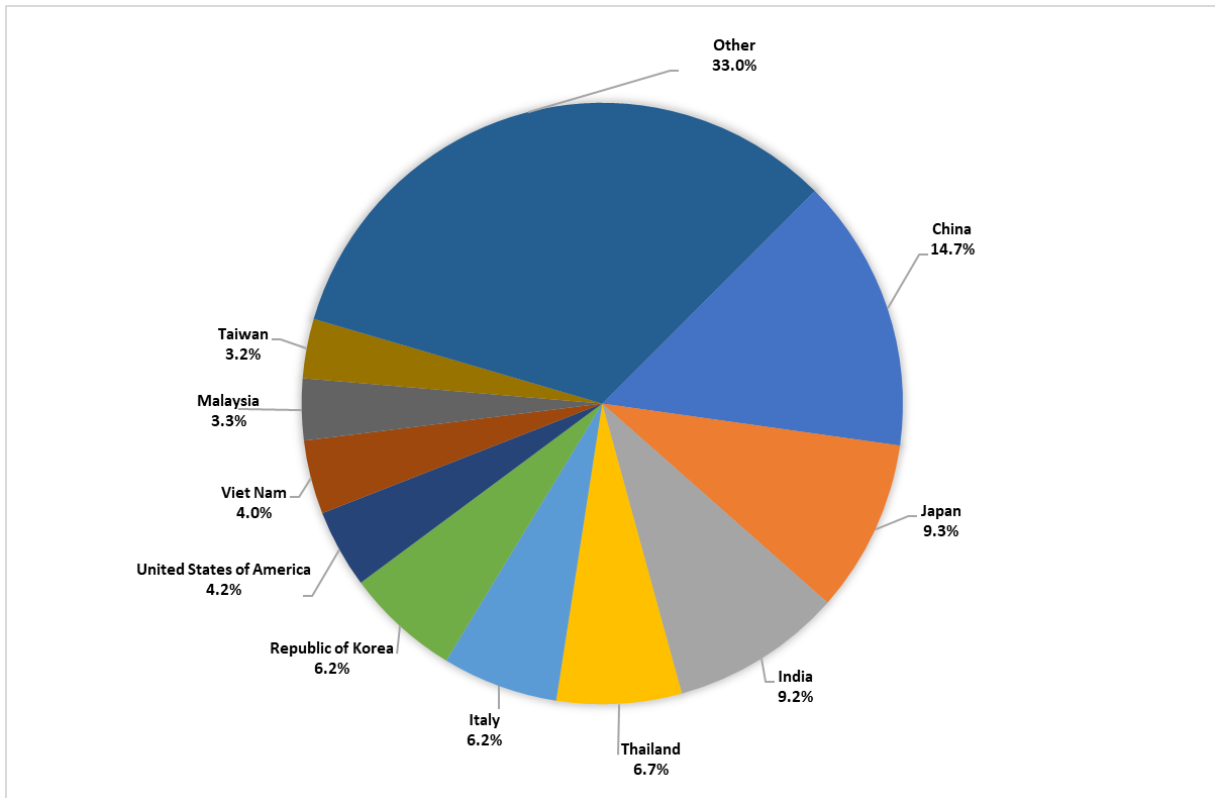
Source: AIMS database

From 1 January to 31 December 2023:

- food from China, Japan and India were subject to the most inspections.
- 67% of food inspections were conducted on food from 10 countries; the remaining 33% concerned food from 127 countries.

A significant proportion of food imports are from New Zealand, but very few are subject to the IFC Act. The Act exempts food imported from New Zealand unless the Order indicates that it applies. Currently, the Order specifies that beef, beef products, ready-to-eat cassava chips and brown seaweed are foods to which the Act applies. The exemption in the Act for food imported from New Zealand was included following the signing of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement between Australia and New Zealand. Under the arrangement, goods produced by or imported into either country that meets one country's legal requirements may be legally sold in the other country.

Figure 7 Percentage of tests applied, by country of origin, 2023



Source: AIMS database

Appendix A: Tests applied

Food group	Test
Caffeinated products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label assessment
Cereal grains and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arsenic Lead
Coconut	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salmonella
Coconut products	Dairy allergen tests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beta-lactoglobulin Casein Total milk
Dairy	Cheese <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> Dried milk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Salmonella</i> Raw milk cheese <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognised Government Certification
Fruit and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit and vegetable residue screen Lead <i>E. coli</i> Fresh chilled or frozen berries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Safety Management Certificates
Hemp and hemp seed products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total THC Cannabidiol
Herbs and spices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Salmonella</i>
Honey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C4 Adulteration Moisture content Reducing sugar content
Human milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Recognised Government Certification</i>
Infant formula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Salmonella</i> <i>Cronobacter</i>
Kava	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Label assessment
Meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>E coli</i> <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> <i>Salmonella</i> Shiga toxin-producing <i>E coli</i> Cephalosporins Fluoroquinolones Virginiamycin Beef and beef products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government certification for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy freedom
Peanut and pistachio products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aflatoxin (peanut and pistachio products)

Imported food inspection data: January to December 2023

Food group	Test
Cassava chips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrocyanic acid
Tofu, soy-bean curd, soymilk curd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bacillus cereus</i>
Mini jelly cups containing konjac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not permitted
Prohibited plants and fungi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not permitted
Seafood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Histamine • <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> • Coagulase-positive staphylococci • <i>E. coli</i> • <i>Salmonella</i> • Paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) • Domoic acid • <i>Vibrio cholerae</i> • Fluoroquinolones • Malachite green • Nitrofurans • Quinolones
Seaweed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iodine • Inorganic arsenic
Sesame seeds and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Salmonella</i>
Supplementary sports food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Label assessment for substances not permitted

Glossary

Term	Definition
Agriculture Import Management System (AIMS)	Computer system that receives data on imported goods from the Integrated Cargo System (ICS) and processes entries for imported food and biosecurity 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.
compliance agreement food	Food imported under a Food Import Compliance Agreement (FICA). FICAs offer food importers an alternative regulatory arrangement to inspection and testing of their products under the IFIS. This involves the department auditing an importer's existing documented food safety management system.
entry	Department of Home Affairs electronic document generated using the ICS. An entry may contain one or more lines of 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)</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)</p> <p>(c) any substance used in preparing a substance or thing referred to in paragraph (a)</p> <p>(d) chewing gum or an ingredient or additive in chewing gum, or any substance used in preparing chewing gum</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 an Australian government authority responsible for developing food standards for Australia and New Zealand. FSANZ also advises the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 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 for the movement of cargo into and out of Australia.
Imported Food Inspection Scheme	IFIS is established under the Imported Food Control Regulations 2019. It provides for the inspection of food at the border to monitor for safety and compliance with Australia's food standards.
inspection	Includes inspection (visual and label assessment) or inspection and analysis (samples taken and sent for analysis) as required.
line	<p>Items of food being imported are recorded in the ICS as lines within the import entry. An import entry may consist of one or more lines of products.</p> <p>Lines are referred to the IFIS through electronic profiling within the ICS. Tests are applied to lines where required, based on the tariff code identifying the food.</p>

Imported food inspection data: January to December 2023

Term	Definition
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).
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 2019. This kind of food is referred to AIMS by the ICS for inspection at the rate of 100% of consignments. The rate is reduced in accordance with a history of compliance.
surveillance food	All other food not classified as risk food or compliance agreement food. This kind of food is referred to AIMS by the ICS for inspection at the rate of 5% of consignments.