ACTIONS FOR FOOD REGULATORS FOR

MONITORING AND ASSESSING COMPLIANCE

Food regulators routinely monitor and assess the compliance of regulated parties. Monitoring activities can be both proactive and reactive and are prioritised using a risk-based approach.

Audits and inspections

Inspections and audits are undertaken by food regulators as a method of collecting information and monitoring and assessing compliance.

A risk-based approach underpins all aspects of an inspection and audit including the nature and frequency.

During an inspection or audit certain processes will be observed and questions asked, samples can be collected, records viewed, and/or photographs taken. All this information will be used to make an assessment of compliance with the regulatory requirements.

ISFR has agreed high level principles for consistent planning and conducting of inspections and audits:

Food Regulation - Principles for inspection of food business

Food Regulation - National regulatory food safety auditor guideline and policy

Surveys and sampling

Food regulators obtain and analyse samples and also conduct surveys to assess compliance with regulatory requirements. A risk-based approach is used to identify priorities for sampling and surveys.

Surveys can be conducted to monitor and assess whether foods comply with standards for composition, labelling and contaminants (microbiological and chemical contaminants). Surveys can involve analysis of samples or involve the assessment of certain information (e.g. the label of a product).

Bi-national coordination

ISFR Surveillance and Monitoring Working Group and the Coordinated Food Survey Plan

ISFR established the Surveillance and Monitoring Working Group (SMWG) to achieve collective and strategic data generation through bi-national coordination and integration of surveillance and monitoring activities to address priorities for the food regulatory system.

Surveillance and monitoring activities of key bi-national interest and priority are included on the ISFR Coordinated Food Survey Plan (the CFSP). The SMWG collectively plans, implements and reports on surveys included on the CFSP. The CFSP is a 3-year rolling plan containing analytical research surveys including the Australian Total Diet Study, analytical compliance surveys and research-based data generation activities. Coordination of survey activities allows for efficient use of resources (e.g. local sampling undertaken by jurisdictions), reduction in duplication and shared ownership of outcomes.

Data sources

Food regulators also receive data from various sources (including external), both voluntary and mandatory, including:

- Mandatory activity reporting by local government and third party auditors.
- Mandatory laboratory and food business notifications of analytical results.
- Reporting of failures and corrective actions.
- Industry generated data.
- Complaints.

These data sources are all useful for monitoring and assessing compliance.

Use of data to inform actions across the food compliance, monitoring and enforcement continuum

Information obtained from monitoring and assessing compliance can help food regulators to best direct efforts along the compliance, monitoring and enforcement continuum. Monitoring data can identify where action may be required to avoid or mitigate harm, help tailor and focus tools to generate compliance, and detect instances of non-compliance and respond in a timely manner.

Food regulators analyse data from all sources to identify trends in a range of parameters over time. Examples include analysis of complaints data for specific topic areas, performance of particular food businesses at a local level, levels of substances in the food supply over time. Trends identified as a result of these analyses inform future topics to focus on for generating compliance (e.g. education campaigns), further coordinated survey work (e.g. targeted compliance survey) or identify activities to respond to non-compliance. Trends in data over time can be used to assess and review the effectiveness of tools used to generate compliance and interventions to respond to non-compliance and to identify opportunities for improvement.