

New Zealand Food Safety Ministry for Primary Industries Manatū Ahu Matua

ACTION PLAN FOR

NEW ZEALAND FOOD SAFETY 2025 - 2027

March 2025

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government

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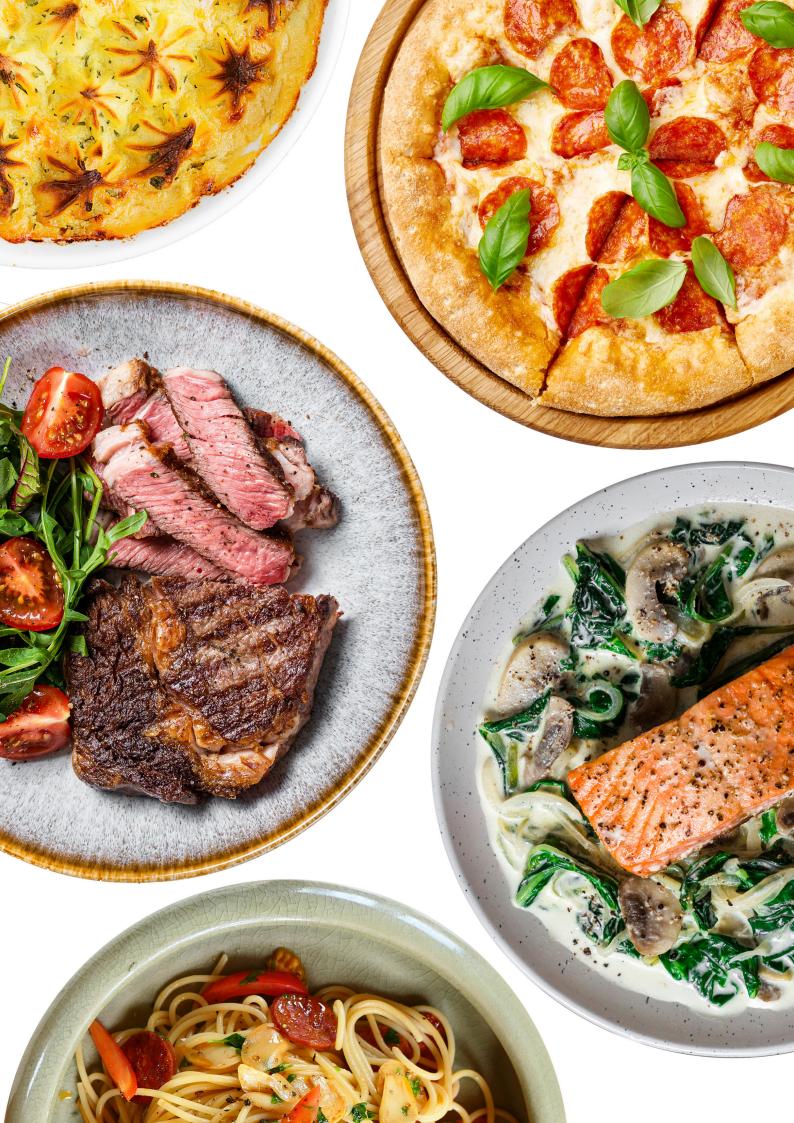
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ACTION PLAN FOR

NEW ZEALAND FOOD SAFETY 2025 - 2027

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'New Zealand food is trusted by everyone, everywhere' is our vision and this new action plan sets out how we aim to deliver on that vision from 2025 to 2027.

Foreword

This action plan for New Zealand Food Safety will operate under the wider Ministry for Primary Industries action plan and sets out how we will contribute to the Ministry's mission: To grow the value of New Zealand's food and fibre sector.

Food is an integral part of our everyday lives. It is essential for nutrition and fundamental to our traditions, here and around the world. Food production is a key contributor to our economy, making up around 8.6 percent of New Zealand's gross domestic product. In the year to December 2024, exports of food from New Zealand were worth \$45 billion, while food production, processing and supply chain services provided over 250,000 jobs.

Maintaining an effective and trusted food safety system in New Zealand is essential for our health, our reputation and our economy.

Everyday our New Zealand Food Safety team delivers core services that traverse the whole food chain from farm to plate. We help to ensure consumers here and overseas can trust the food they eat is safe, suitable and accurately labelled. Our delivery of core services in the food safety system is fundamental to achieving our vision.

We operate in a dynamic environment. The global food system is rapidly changing due to growing innovation, complex international supply chains and changes in consumer preferences and behaviour. These external factors can bring many challenges, yet they also create exciting opportunities, and the food safety system needs to continue to evolve with these changes.

Our action plan reflects new and enhanced services funded through two new levies under the Food Act 2014. This will enable New Zealand Food Safety to continue to strengthen the food safety system for the benefit of consumers and food businesses.

This action plan will guide our direction for the next three years and sets the framework for delivering the outcomes which underpin our vision. It will ensure we are implementing an ambitious programme of work that will make the greatest difference for New Zealand and is focused on achieving our three priorities:

New Zealand food is safe and suitable

New Zealand has a thriving food economy

New Zealand has a well-functioning food safety system

We will review and monitor our delivery to ensure we are progressing our strategic outcomes and implementing the right initiatives to make the greatest impact, and will continue to refine these in line with Government and organisational priorities.

Our food safety system will be an important foundation for achieving the Government's goal to double the value of exports in ten years. To support this aspiration, we will need to be agile and ensure that we are positioned as an enabler for New Zealand's food economy.

We are excited to work with all our partners, consumers and industry who play a role in the wider food safety system to realise these important outcomes.

Ngā manaakitanga

Vincent Arbuckle

Deputy Director-General New Zealand Food Safety





Who we are and what we do

OUR ROLE

A well-functioning food safety system is fundamental to the production and sale of food and enables the food and beverage sector to thrive and innovate without undue regulatory burden. As such a large proportion of the food produced in New Zealand is exported to consumers around the world, it is essential that overseas consumers and their governments continue to have a high level of confidence and trust in our New Zealand food safety system.

New Zealand Food Safety is a business unit of the Ministry for Primary Industries. Our work protects people's health, reduces the economic burden of foodborne disease and underpins New Zealand's economy.

Under New Zealand legislation, food businesses are responsible for producing safe and suitable food and are required to demonstrate compliance with the standards. New Zealand Food Safety is responsible for the leadership and stewardship of the food safety system by overseeing the functioning of the system as a whole.

The New Zealand food safety system aims to ensure food is safe and suitable for its intended use by consumers in New Zealand and overseas. The food safety system plays an important role in protecting public health by reducing the risk of serious illness and death from foodborne illness wherever our food is consumed. The provision of accurate and trusted information for New Zealand food enables consumers to make informed food choices.

The food safety system is the all-encompassing term used for the many regulatory systems (food, wine, animal products, Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM), and organics) New Zealand Food Safety has responsibility for. It covers all food and beverages for sale for human consumption, including products produced in New Zealand and those that have been imported. It also includes pet food, animal feed, agricultural compounds and veterinary medicines and veterinary medicines (which can impact on public health as well as animal health and welfare), and other animal products like wool.

What we do

We regulate

to ensure that New Zealand food is safe and suitable.

We enable

the New Zealand food economy to grow and innovate by ensuring that food safety regulation and systems are fit for purpose, riskbased, proportionate and easy to navigate.

We convene and collaborate

with stakeholders and industry to achieve stewardship across the New Zealand food safety system.



We set the rules and standards

We lead the implementation of the Government's food safety policy decisions, develop standards that are risk-based and founded on robust science, and ensure the right regulatory requirements are in place. We ensure food that is imported, grown, manufactured, prepared, shared and consumed across New Zealand and overseas, is safe and suitable for everyone.

We are continuing to strengthen the domestic and imported food regulatory systems to support a robust food safety system. We work closely with industry to develop guidance that supports food businesses to make and import safe and suitable food.



We provide assurances to trading partners

Ensuring New Zealand food is trusted and recognised by overseas markets is vital and makes it easier for businesses to export and grow the value of New Zealand's food exports. We facilitate access to international markets for New Zealand exporters, implement trade agreements for exports and imports, and provide export assurances on behalf of the New Zealand Government to overseas governments. We work together with counterparts in Australia to support our shared Joint Food Standards System.



We verify and enforce compliance with rules and standards

We actively promote a strong industry food safety culture and maintain the integrity of the food safety system through industry compliance. The food safety system depends on independent third parties checking (verifying) that operators are following their food plans and are producing safe and suitable products. There are a number of officially recognised entities in New Zealand that carry out verification activities and laboratory services.

Territorial authorities (known as local councils) are a key partner in the domestic food safety system. Under the Food Act 2014 we share a co-regulatory role, where territorial authorities provide the permission for local food businesses to operate, and ensure compliance.

We respond to reports of food-related incidents, including breaches of food legislation, and support food businesses to manage the removal of unsafe food from sale by coordinating food recalls.



We work with industry and sector partners

We regularly engage with industry and partner agencies and work together to deliver food safety initiatives. The collaborative relationships we have with industry and all our partners are, and will continue to be, a key enabler of our ability to deliver a wellfunctioning food safety system and will be critical to achieving the Government's goal of doubling export value within ten years.

Māori have broad interests in the food safety system as growers, producers, food businesses and consumers, and we are working to ensure we support Māori economic, social and cultural aspirations for food safety and the growth of the Māori food sector.

We also help the food sector to prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from adverse events. This includes working with the Ministry of Health to support public health and wellbeing, and collaborating with the Ministry of Health, the National Public Health Service and local territorial authorities to investigate and manage responses to foodborne illnesses when they arise.



We inform consumers

We proactively deliver evidence-based food safety and suitability communications, to equip New Zealand consumers to make informed food choices and understand safe food preparation.

We carry out consumer research to increase our understanding of different consumer groups' behaviours and attitudes around food safety and suitability. We use these insights to improve how we provide food safety information to consumers, with a focus on at-risk groups, so we can best support consumers to make the choices that are important to them.



We monitor the performance of the system

By undertaking a wide range of monitoring and oversight activities, we ensure that food products are safe and suitable for human consumption. This gives confidence that the overall system is working as it should and provides an early warning if something is not working well.

Our functions Overview of the New Zealand Food Safety regulatory system					
	We set rules and standards	Food businesses create their plan or programme	We approve the plan or programme	We verify operation with the plan or programme	We enforce with rules
New Zealand Food Safety	We develop standards that are risk-based and founded on robust science. They cover producing, transporting, making, storing and selling food and beverages, and include inputs into food production (e.g. herbicides). We work closely with industry to develop guidance that supports food businesses to make safe and suitable food.	We develop pre-approved template plans to make it easier for food businesses to manage food safety and suitability.	We check food businesses' risk-based plan or programme, to ensure they are sufficient to address food safety and suitability risks. Large, export-focused and/ or higher-risk food businesses generally register their plan or programme directly with us.	The food safety system depends on independent third parties checking (verifying) that businesses are following their risk-based plan or programme and producing safe and suitable products. This includes New Zealand Food Safety verifiers at export meat processing plants.	We respond to report incidents including bre legislation and suppor to manage the remova from sale. Our Ministry for Prima New Zealand Food Saf Food Safety Officers, u enforcement activity, to enforce compliance standards.
Businesses/ retailers	Businesses are responsible for producing safe and suitable food and are required to demonstrate compliance with the rules and standards.	Food businesses must have a risk-based plan or programme that demonstrates how they meet their food safety and suitability responsibilities. Large-scale food businesses tend to develop their own tailored plan or programme. Small- scale businesses tend to adopt template plans to reduce cost and effort.		Food businesses regularly check their own operations to make sure they are acting in accordance with their risk- based plan or programme. They will need to demonstrate to independent verifiers that they are following their plan or programme and meeting the standards.	
Territorial authorities & other			Many food businesses (typically single-site cafes and restaurants) work directly with their local territorial authority to have their plan approved.	Under the Food Act 2014 New Zealand Food Safety shares a co-regulatory role with territorial authorities, which provide permission for local food businesses to operate and ensure compliance.	Territorial Authorities Food Safety Officers w enforcement activity, to enforce compliance standards.

We undertake a wide range of monitoring and oversight activities

to ensure that food products are safe and suitable

Four main laws form the legislative basis for New Zealand's food safety system

Food legislation overview

Food Act 2014

Regulates horticultural production, processing of food, food retail (e.g. supermarkets), and food service (e.g. cafes and restaurants) as examples. Provides for the adoption of joint Australia and New Zealand Food Standards that form part of the Food Standards Code.

Wine Act 2003

Regulates production, processing, and export of wine.

Animal Products Act 1999

Regulates production, processing, and export of animal products (e.g. dairy products, meat, and fish).

orce compliance les and standards	We provide assurances to trading partners (if required)	
orts of food-related breaches of food oort food businesses oval of unsafe food	We provide export assurances on behalf of the New Zealand Government to overseas governments for compliance with New Zealand's food safety system and overseas market access	
imary Industries and Safety warranted s, undertake ty, when necessary, nce with rules and	requirements (OMARs).	
es have warranted s who undertake ty, when necessary, nce with rules and		

Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997

Regulates the importation, manufacture, sale, and use of agricultural compounds and veterinary medicines, including pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics, and animal feeds.

Current context

Strategic context

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has refreshed its Strategic Intentions 2024-2028 that will deliver on the Government's priorities, and will focus effort on achieving the Ministry's mission: *To grow the value of New Zealand's food and fibre sector.*

New Zealand Food Safety contributes to the Ministry's mission through the delivery of our own strategic priorities and initiatives. This ensures that we are playing our part in driving further success and growth in New Zealand's food and fibre sector, while ensuring New Zealand food is safe and suitable and maintaining the integrity of New Zealand's food safety system.

Economic impacts

At the commencement of this action plan, the food and fibre sector is expected to bounce back from the previous years slowdown in economic growth. Businesses operating in the food and beverage sector have had to navigate a number of economic challenges in recent years. With the global economic environment showing signs of improvement, it is likely that many of these businesses will start to experience an easing of elevated cost pressures.

Everyone operating within the entire food supply chain has had to adapt to the ever changing economic landscape. New Zealand Food Safety will continue to support the ability of the food sector to maintain and increase the value of its exports and domestic products.

Trade and market forces

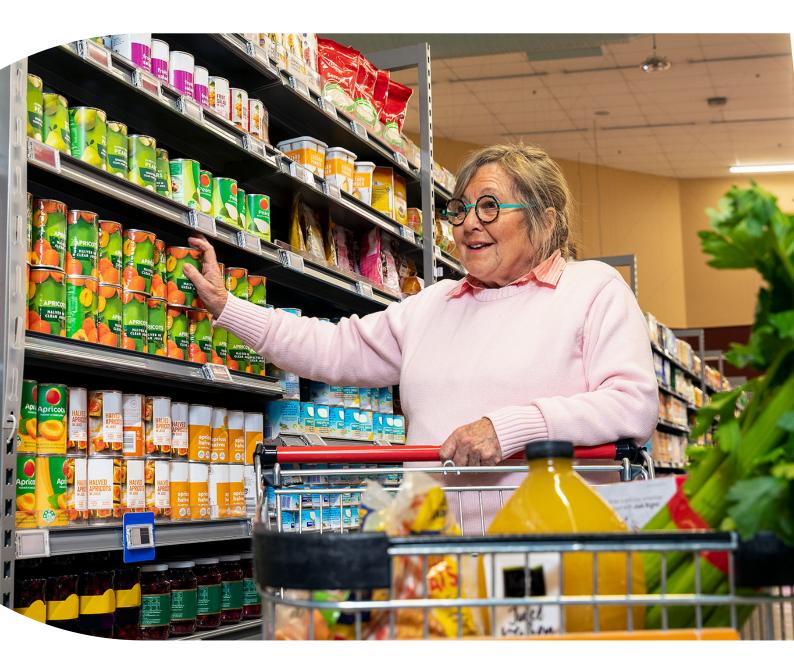
The December 2024 MPI Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries (SOPI) forecasts strong growth for the food and fibre sector, with export revenue expected to increase by 7 percent in the year to 30 June 2025.¹⁾

Many of our food and beverage exporters have navigated their way through a particularly challenging period due to a variety of trade and market forces. It is a testament to the resilience of the food and beverage sector that they have not only continued to succeed and deliver strong export growth, but they are on track to achieve record export revenue.¹⁾

The food and beverage sector will be a significant contributor to the Government's goal of doubling export revenue over the next 10 years. We are committed to working with sector partners and industry to help deliver the Government's goal, by unlocking more value from exports and maximising trade opportunities for New Zealand primary sector exporters.



1) MPI Situation and Outlook for Primary Industries, December 2024.



Consumer preferences and behaviour

Consumers both here and overseas demand high-quality food that is safe to eat. Increasingly, consumers are also concerned with food prices and the affordability of healthy food, which is changing how and where food is bought and consumed. Issues such as nutrition, animal welfare, climate change and sustainability also influence consumers' food choices. Changing consumer behaviour and preferences is driving opportunities for the food sector to innovate to meet future demands and emerging trends. This is also increasing demand for assurances about food attributes and the authenticity and traceability of food.

It is more important than ever that New Zealand Food Safety maintains and strengthens the food safety system, so consumers can continue to trust that New Zealand food is safe and suitable.



OUR FUNCTIONS ACROSS THE FOOD SAFETY SYSTEM



We set the rules and standards



We monitor the performance of the system



We work with industry and sector partners



We verify and enforce compliance with rules and standards



Engaging

Tuītuituia

Proactive Tiro whakamua



Strengthen the food sector's resilience to food safety incidents and adverse events.



Enhance our regulatory systems so they can meet future demands and emerging trends.



Integrate insights to improve system performance.

We provide assurances to trading partners



We inform consumers





OUTCOME

New Zealand food is safe and suitable

Consumers are at the centre of everything we do. Our internationally recognised and respected food safety system ensures New Zealand food is safe and suitable for its intended use and supports the health and wellbeing of consumers.



OUTCOME New Zealand food is safe and suitable

Food is safe

The New Zealand food safety system protects and contributes to improving public health. It aims to minimise food health risks to consumers here, and wherever New Zealand food is exported.

We work collaboratively with health agencies on many areas related to protecting and promoting public health, especially those related to acute foodborne illness, critical food safety events, food composition and nutritional health.

We have prioritised strengthening the food sector's resilience to food safety incidents and adverse events, so if and when they do occur those involved are ready to respond to minimise the impact on consumers and the sector. The overall aim of any response is to protect the health and wellbeing of the public in New Zealand and in all the places our food is exported to.

Food is suitable

Food also needs to be suitable, which means it needs to be labelled and identified correctly, and not contain anything unexpected. Consumers want to make informed choices about the food they eat, based on their own criteria such as its source, ingredients, means of production and a range of other characteristics.

We must ensure that consumers can trust the accuracy and authenticity of the information for New Zealand food and beverages. This will equip and empower consumers to make food

choices that will better support their health and lifestyle preferences.

Consumers

Consumers themselves have an important role to play in food safety. The safe handling and preparation of food can have a significant impact on minimising the risk of foodborne illness.

Consumers considered the most vulnerable to foodborne illness include the young (0-5 years), older (65+ years), pregnant, and immunocompromised. These people may have low immunity due to impaired or underdeveloped immune systems and are more at risk of getting sick from contaminated food.

We want food to be safe and suitable to eat for all New Zealanders and to reduce the incidence of foodborne illnesses in vulnerable groups of our communities. We will continue to support consumers to make informed decisions and act in ways that will support their health.

We will continue to deliver our core services and functions to ensure New Zealand food is safe and suitable. The following graphic outlines the strategic priorities and initiatives that we will focus our efforts on in order to deliver on this outcome.

New Zealand food is safe and suitable

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



1. Ensure consumers are protected from foodborne illnesses and other foodrelated risks.

2. Promote food safety practices and equip consumers to make

informed food

INITIATIVES

- **1.1** Build sector capability and resilience in the food production system to address antimicrobial resistance related risks.
- **1.2** Invest in targeted research and monitoring to inform changes in regulatory interventions that better address allergens, chemical and microbiological hazards, and reduce the long-term health risks arising from foods.
- **1.3** Optimise the use of human health, animal health, and food hazard information to anticipate, prevent and respond to food safety risks.
- 1.4 Develop and deliver a comprehensive work programme that supports industry to better control major foodborne illnesses and other food safety risks in order to protect public health.
- **2.1** Review and continue regular consumer research to gather improved insights on New Zealand consumers' food safety and suitability behaviour.
- **2.2** Review and extend our consumer food safety and suitability communication programme.
- **2.3** Deliver campaigns to increase consumer knowledge and understanding of food labelling to influence behaviour change.



choices.

- 3. Strengthen the food sector's resilience to food safety incidents and adverse events.
- **3.1** Expand our food safety readiness and response exercise programme to enhance key industry partners' readiness for, response to and ability to recover from significant events.
- **3.2** Extend our emerging risks insights programme to increase industry's preparedness and ability to prepare for and respond to food safety risks.
- **3.3** Work with industry to be prepared to protect the safety and suitability of food in potential food safety incidents, adverse events, and from major animal and plant diseases.

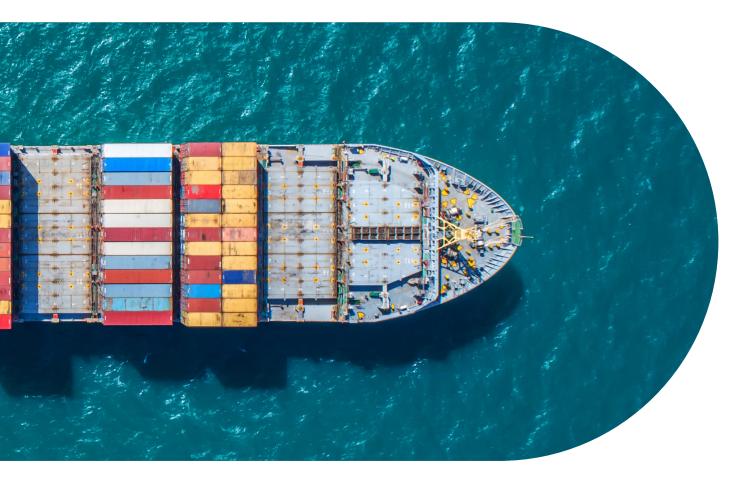




OUTCOME

New Zealand has a thriving food economy

The food safety system provides the regulatory framework for those operating in, or contributing to, New Zealand's food economy to grow and thrive. The food economy covers the full farm to fork spectrum, including those producing, transporting, making, storing and selling food and beverages. It also includes inputs into food production such as agricultural compounds and veterinary medicines.



OUTCOME

New Zealand has a thriving food economy

The food and beverage sectors are significant contributors to our economy and will play an integral role in supporting the Government's goal to double the value of exports in ten years.

Food safety regulatory system

While New Zealand Food Safety works to ensure a robust food safety system that supports safe and suitable food, we are also mindful that balance is needed between rules and regulations and the flexibility the food sector needs to innovate and grow to meet the demands of consumers. We do this by ensuring the rules are evolving as the food sector evolves and that the regulatory obligations on businesses are fit for purpose.

Flexible food regulatory settings

We are committed to ensuring the domestic and imported food regulatory systems remain up to date and responsive and to looking for opportunities where regulatory settings can be streamlined to make it easier to do business. We support food businesses and importers, and work with industry to develop guidance that makes it easier for them to understand and meet their regulatory obligations and to adopt innovative solutions to achieve their growth aspirations.

Emerging trends and consumer preferences

A vast range of economic, environmental, social, ethical and technological issues can influence consumer expectations and choices. These can create trends in food purchasing and diet, which in turn can impact on the food supply chain and public health. We will enhance the food safety system so it is equipped to respond to future demands, without compromising the overall integrity of the system.

We will continue to provide our core services and functions across the food safety system and provide oversight of the system. The following graphic outlines the strategic priorities and initiatives that we will focus our efforts on in order to deliver on this outcome.

New Zealand has a thriving food economy

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



4. Enable food businesses to navigate the food safety regulatory system.



6. Enhance our

regulatory systems so they can meet

future demands and

emerging trends.

5. Provide flexible regulatory settings to enable the food industry to be agile and meet market opportunities.



- **4.1** Support domestic food producers and businesses to understand and meet food safety and suitability regulatory requirements through better access to regulatory advice and expanded outreach services.
- **4.2** Implement a programme of work to enhance New Zealand's imported food system and support importers to identify and comply with their requirements.
- **4.3** Expand support for exporters to achieve their export growth ambitions and the Government's goal for doubling the value of exports within ten years.
- **5.1** Implement the Food Act exemptions to compositional and labelling requirements for overseas markets.
- **5.2** Work with key industry partners to identify opportunities for streamlining food safety system regulations and standards.
- **5.3** Optimise the standards for meat inspection, supervision and inspector training requirements.
- **5.4** Streamline the regulatory environment for Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines (ACVM) and the registration of methane inhibitors and other similar technologies, while ensuring their safe use, to support farmers and growers.
- **6.1** Complete delivery of the MPI Trade Certification programme to modernise New Zealand's export and import certification systems.
- **6.2** Build on the MPI Trade Certification programme to increase digital solutions that will streamline systems for exporters and be responsive to future overseas market requirements.
- **6.3** Implement the New Zealand organics standard and assess equivalence with priority export markets.
- **6.4** Support the food sector to safely use sustainable packaging and production methods and enable the use of innovative and novel technologies.
- **6.5** Adopt AI use for New Zealand Food Safety to support the food sector (and its own efficiency).





OUTCOME

New Zealand has a well-functioning food safety system

New Zealand is globally renowned for producing high-quality safe and suitable food. Each year billions of dollars of food and beverages produced in New Zealand are exported overseas, bringing employment opportunities and directly contributing to local communities.



OUTCOME New Zealand has a well-functioning food safety system

System partnerships

As the regulatory steward of New Zealand's food safety system, we are the trusted voice and lead authority on food safety advice. We work proactively and collaboratively with multiple parties in the system to achieve shared accountabilities and strategic ambitions.

It is through our cooperative and constructive partnerships with industry, public health agencies and other key stakeholders that we continue to champion food safety and facilitate the delivery of joint food safety outcomes.

International engagement

New Zealand's food safety system and the technical expertise of those who work within it are internationally highly regarded. We hold a global leadership position in championing evidence and risk-based approaches to setting standards and managing food safety.

Engagement with international stakeholders is essential to ensure New Zealand remains at the forefront of international developments in food safety, and to promote and protect New Zealand's interests in the global trade of food and agricultural products.

System performance

A robust and well-functioning food safety system is an essential part of the production and the sale of food. We will integrate data from across the food safety system to provide a system-level view of trends, insights and overall performance.

This will provide assurance to consumers both here and overseas, that New Zealand food is safe and suitable. It also ensures overseas governments continue to have a high level of trust in our food safety system and export assurances, enabling the ongoing maintenance and improvement of market access for New Zealand products.

Our work will enable New Zealand food sector businesses to maximise trade opportunities and we will facilitate export growth to support New Zealand's economic objectives. The following graphic outlines the strategic priorities and initiatives that we will focus our efforts on in order to deliver on this outcome.

New Zealand has a well-functioning food safety system

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



7. Facilitate partnerships with system stakeholders to address challenges and opportunities.

INITIATIVES

- **7.1** Develop and deliver a programme for industry and government to increase sector-specific food safety capability within New Zealand.
- **7.2** Develop and implement a programme of support and performance oversight for Territorial Authorities and third parties in their regulatory roles.
- **7.3** Work with the New Zealand Food Safety Science and Research Centre to ensure the food safety system has the relevant scientific evidence and capability to inform risk-based decision making.
- **7.4** Reinvigorate New Zealand Food Safety's partnership forums to enable effective collaboration with industry, public health and NZ Inc agencies.



- Engage with international counterparts to represent New Zealand's interests.
- **8.1** Strengthen the relationship and regulatory standards of the Trans-Tasman Joint Food System and implement a new partnership agreement following the FSANZ Act review.
- **8.2** Engage with international counterparts and showcase the New Zealand food safety system, for example by hosting the 2026 International Heads of Food Agencies Forum (IHFAF).
- **8.3** Lead New Zealand's participation in specified committees of international bodies, such as Codex Alimentarius, to ensure New Zealand's interests are effectively represented.
- **8.4** Work with industry to maintain and enhance technical and regulatory market access in agreed sectors.

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- **9.1** Integrate insights, data and performance results from across the food safety system to demonstrate the system is meeting expected outcomes and improve the system's performance.
- 9. Integrate insights to improve system performance.
- **9.2** Conduct a research programme to understand the cost of foodborne illness and recalls / disruption.

Ko tāu rourou Ko tāku rourou Ka ora ai te iwi

By sharing your food basket with my food basket the people will thrive



New Zealand Food Safety Ministry for Primary Industries Manatū Ahu Matua





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