

Results achieved through controls of foodstuffs by Customs in 2017

In 2017, Customs inspected 2 736 consignments under its jurisdiction. Of the examined foodstuff items, 36 % had been imported to Finland directly from non-EU regions. Of the samples of internal market products (1 751 items), one in every four was of non-EU origin, but had been brought to Finland through another EU Member State. As for about a hundred products, the details of their country of origin remained unclear. Most examinations involved foodstuffs from Spain which comprised 272 consignments, mainly fresh vegetables and fruit. As for regions outside the EU, most foodstuffs were imported from Thailand. Customs examined altogether 207 items worth of products from Thailand, mainly preserved foods and perishable products.

Based on product groups, the most significant categories of goods examined by the Customs Laboratory were fruit and fruit products (617 consignments), as well as fresh vegetables and vegetable products (556 consignments).

Table 1. Foodstuffs examined by Customs in 2017

Samples (pcs)	Product group description	OK	REMARK	REJECTED
149	Corn grains and corn products	123	16	10
187	Corn dough -based products	158	18	11
556	Vegetables and vegetable products	458	65	33
45	Legume seeds and products	34	1	10
617	Fruits and fruit products	577	29	11
115	Nuts and nut products	97	13	5
102	Oil seeds and fruits	95	5	2
18	Starchy root crops and tubers	18		
174	Herbs, spices et al.	133	22	19
85	Juices, spreads et. al made from fruits, vegetables and plants	71	9	5
18	Fish and fish products	18		
17	Meat and dairy analogues	15	1	1
64	Waters, water-based soft drinks et al.	47	13	4
133	Raw ingredients for hot drinks and infusion	106	15	12
21	Alcoholic beverages	15	4	2
65	Sweets and chocolate	41	20	4
46	Foodstuffs for adolescents	41	2	3
80	Foodstuffs for persons with special diets (incl. supplements)	30	14	36
100	Compiled courses	69	22	9
111	Spice products and meal sauces	82	16	13
33	Purified isolated ingredients	22	10	1
2736		2250	295	191

Of the consignments examined in controls of foodstuffs, altogether 191 products (7 %) did not comply with regulations. Minor defects that gave cause for remarks were present in

295 consignments (11 %). The share of consignments that did not comply with regulations was 13 % in foodstuffs imported from outside the EU, and 4 % in products imported from the EU territory. In most cases, consignments that did not comply with regulations were imported from Thailand, followed by the United States and Turkey.

Reasons for non-compliance in foodstuffs

Most non-compliant product consignments involved special diet foodstuffs (including food supplements). Serious defects were present in almost every other product. Altogether 80 samples were examined. The most common defects involved general package labels. Moreover, two food supplements contained ingredients included in the annexes to the List of Medicines (meaning that the product may be a medicine) or novel food ingredients (in the case of one food supplement). There were also observations on irradiation and non-compliance with regulations on food additives.

The share of products that did not comply with regulations was low in the product categories that were examined the most. Of fresh fruit and vegetable products, 2 % was rejected because of pesticide residues. Of fresh vegetables and vegetable products, 6 % was rejected due to pesticide residues and salmonella, among other reasons.

As in previous years, the two most common reasons for non-compliance were package label errors and plant protectant residues. The third most common reason for non-compliance was poor microbiological quality, including the presence of salmonella (figure 1).

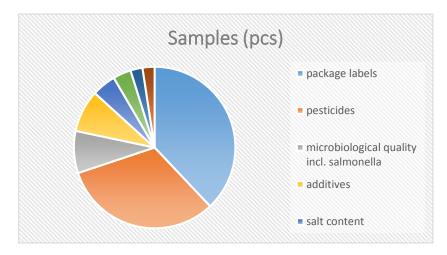


Figure 1. Distribution of the most common defects detected in foodstuffs in 2017

The European Commission was notified of foodstuffs hazardous to health through the RASFF system. Most notifications concerned fresh produce that were found to contain plant protectant residues in levels hazardous to health, as well as foodstuffs that contained salmonella.

Customs examined 310 samples of organically produced foodstuffs. Seven of the samples did not meet the regulations on organically produced food due to plant protectant residues. A further three organic food items were rejected due to errors in labels. The controls concerned altogether 62 operators. Altogether 239 examined samples were taken from internal trade imports, and 71 samples from imports from third countries.

Controls of food contact materials

Customs examined 419 samples of supplies that come into contact with food, such as cutlery, dishes, and goods meant for processing or storing food. A total of 86 % of the consignments had been imported to Finland from outside the EU. About half of the products that were examined in controls internal market imports originated in third countries, which means that about 95 % of the controlled products had been manufactured outside the EU. The most common country of origin for food contact materials was China.

Altogether 26 product items, i.e. 6 % of the examined products, did not comply with regulations. Lesser defects were found in 73 products (17 %). The products that did not comply with regulations all originated in non-EU countries, apart from drinking glasses that originated in Italy. In 11 cases, rejections of products were due e.g. to harmful substances that shed from materials, such as volatile compounds in silicone products. In 6 cases, products were rejected due to heavy metal contents that were too high (ceramic dishes and painted drinking glasses). Products were also rejected due to errors in labels and documentation (figure 2). Products that potentially presented a health hazard were reported to the European Commission via the RASFF system. Reports were submitted e.g. due to the shedding of heavy metals.

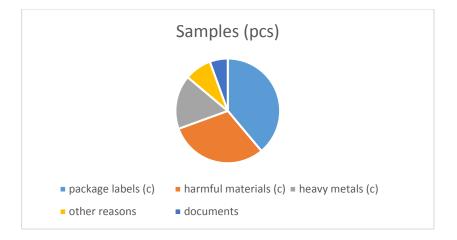


Figure 2. Distribution of the most common defects detected in foodstuffs in 2017