

Shopping Basket Survey

Summary of Pilot Phase

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At Food Standards Scotland we have a unique role, working independently of Ministers and industry to provide advice which is impartial, and based on robust science and data.

Our remit covers all aspects of the food chain which can impact on public health – aiming to protect consumers from food safety risks and promote healthy eating

Contents

1. Aims	3
2. Sampling approach	3
3. Sampling Plan	4
4. Results	5

1. Aims

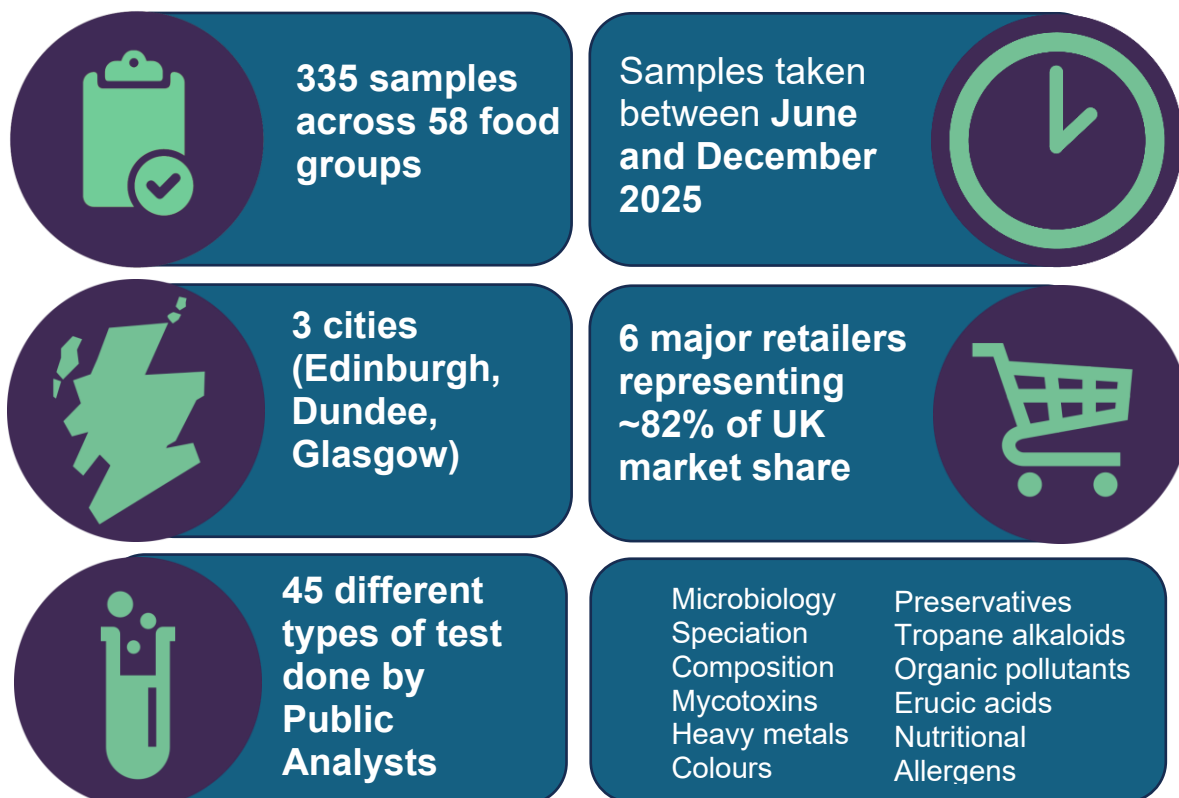
The shopping basket survey is a new approach to surveillance sampling for FSS, designed to run in parallel with our targeted surveillance priorities. The aims of the programme are:

- To provide assurance to consumers that the contents of the food shop are safe and authentic.
- To gather data on commonly consumed foods that will inform risk assessments, horizon scanning and other surveillance sampling.

2. Sampling approach

The pilot phase of the survey included 12% of the samples planned for the overall project. Due to the broad range of food types analysed in the survey, we are able to test for a range of hazards that present in different ways. This includes:

- Hazards with a history of occurrence in certain foods, for example high nitrates and sulphites in processed meat products or aflatoxins in nuts.
- Emerging risks or issues being detected more due to increased monitoring, such as PFAS in eggs or tropane alkaloids in cereals.
- Spot checks to ensure compliance and look for unexpected issues where there is currently no intelligence suggesting problems, for example lactose in lactose-free milks and allergens in plant-based milks.



3. Sampling Plan

The sampling plan was informed by the design study ([Design of the shopping basket survey | Food Standards Scotland](#)), with the number of samples for each food category determined by the volume of the food purchased by Scottish consumers balanced with the potential risks posed by the food. The table below details all food categories sampled in the pilot by volume. Each line represents a category (e.g. total milk), while the text inside lists the sub-categories assigned within it (e.g. regular dairy milk, plant-based milk alternatives, and lactose-free milk), followed by the number of samples for the category overall.

Food Category	Number of Samples
Milk, plant 'milk', lactose-free milk	36
Ambient apple juice	24
Loose bakery, gluten-free, long-life bread	24
Salad/herbs, leafy veg, pre-prepared	21
Chilled bakery	21
Fresh/pre-cut fruit, berries & grapes, dried fruit	18
Meat ready meals, frozen vegetables	14
Ambient cakes/pastries	11
Ginger biscuits, oat biscuits	10
Flour, rapeseed oil, yellow/red spices	9
Chilled ready meals containing meat	9
Oats, maize, cereals, jams, nut butters	8
Oily fish, meat, curry sauces	6
Protein yoghurts, non-dairy yoghurts	6
Fresh poultry	6
Nuts	6
Dry pasta, basmati rice	6
Infant food	4
Eggs	4
Cooked meats	4
Chilled meat pies	4
Beef mince	4
Raw milk, cheese, low fat cheese	4
Bacon (chilled)	4
Frozen raw haddock/cod	4
Minced or diced pork	4
Chilled burgers	4
Butter/margarine	4
Chilled apple juice/protein drinks	4
Sausages	4
Minced or diced meat or poultry	4
Fresh soup	4
Chilled rice	4
Ready to eat smoked fish, chilled oily fish	4
Chilled continental sausages	4
Infant formula	4

4. Results

Out of 335 samples analysed, 7 were deemed unsatisfactory by analysts (2.1% of total). The 7 unsatisfactory samples were:



All unsatisfactory samples were due to hygiene indicators or meat composition; as such, there was no immediate risk to consumers identified. Nevertheless, all unsatisfactory results were communicated to the relevant Local Authorities to take appropriate action.

The overall high level of compliance should provide Scottish consumers with assurance that the contents of their weekly food shop are safe and authentic.

The pilot phase of the survey successfully gathered valuable retail surveillance data and delivered proof of concept for the programme.