FOOD AND FEED

What is the food and feed programme?

The food and feed programme ensures that a well-functioning and safe food chain is in place. This is a key public health and economic priority. Outbreaks of serious animal and plant diseases may cause major direct losses to agriculture and potentially enormous indirect losses to the EU economy. To support this objective, the food and feed programme includes the following.

- National veterinary programmes for the eradication, control and surveillance of transmissible, often epidemic animal diseases and zoonoses (diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans).
- National survey programmes for organisms that are harmful to plants, ensuring early detection and eradication of pests.
- Training in the field of food and feed safety, animal health, animal welfare and plant health, through the ‘better training for safer food’ programme.
- The funding of European Union reference laboratories, which help ensure the proper functioning of the internal market, the protection of human health and the maintenance of consumer confidence. The EU reference laboratories ensure high-quality and uniform testing in the EU and provide training to hundreds of national reference laboratories in a number of food safety priority areas. This ensures that all Member States work within a consistent and uniform regulatory framework.
- Financial support for emergency measures in order to contain animal diseases and pest outbreaks. These measures act like a fire extinguisher, putting down or containing the outbreak and avoiding further spread of the disease.

Why is it necessary?

The technical and financial support provided by the EU to the Member States has achieved better animal and plant health in the EU. Alone, Member States have difficulty securing the appropriate financial resources to respond to the combination of present and potential challenges. The variety of measures to tackle pests and diseases requires a centralised management system to properly coordinate and organise the implementation of specific actions in the Member States. Moreover, Member States which might not have a direct interest in combating a particular disease or pest still have to look after the overall interests of the EU.

Diseases can spread rapidly between Member States and affect the entire EU market. EU intervention is needed to minimise the impact on human, animal and plant health, as well as on the industry and the markets. Outbreaks can come at a huge cost for the EU budget, national budgets and the farming community. For example, the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak of 2001, which started in the United Kingdom but spread to other countries, is estimated to have cost budgets up to EUR 12 billion.

The network of laboratories ensures that all countries apply a consistent and uniform regulatory framework, while the training programme promotes a common approach to the implementation and enforcement of EU legislation. Harmonisation of rules and sharing of knowledge and expertise in the food chain and related areas could not be achieved through isolated efforts at national level without EU financial support.

Outlook for the 2021-2027 period

The food and feed programme has been integrated into the Commission’s proposal for the single market programme through a dedicated food strand.
Key performance indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>PROGRESS TO TARGET</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member States free from the animal disease bovine brucellosis</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20 Member States out of 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member States free from the animal disease bovine tuberculosis</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17 Member States out of 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member States free from the animal disease melioidosis</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20 Member States out of 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coverage of EU territory by surveys for pests not known to occur in EU territory</td>
<td></td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90% coverage out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverage of EU territory by surveys for most dangerous pests</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100% coverage out of 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of controls in particular areas of concern (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>71% favourable trend out of 95%</td>
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(1) Latest results are from 2018.

Where are we in the implementation?

- Since 2014, the budget implementation of the food and feed programme has increased gradually. However, the trend was reversed in 2020: the total amount of the budget consumed in 2020 (EUR 247.2 million) was considerably lower than in 2019 (EUR 289.7 million).
- The national veterinary programmes target transmissible, often epidemic animal diseases. There was a significant reduction in their budget between 2014 and 2020 mainly due to the phasing out of the funding of bovine tuberculosis eradication programmes since 2018 and the reallocation of additional budget amounts to higher-priority diseases (such as African swine fever and lumpy skin disease). In 2020, 146 national veterinary programmes, covering the monitoring and eradication of 11 diseases and implemented by all 27 Member States and the United Kingdom, were approved and implemented. Around EUR 117.2 million was allocated to co-fund them, which accounts for the largest proportion of spending under the food and feed budget.
- The national survey programmes for organisms harmful to plants ensure early detection and eradication of pest outbreaks. The programme covered 62 different plant pests; 24 programmes were implemented in 2020 and the number of participating Member States has grown from 17 in 2015 to 24 from 2017 onwards.
- There was a significant increase in the consumption of the budget for emergency measures, mainly due to severe outbreaks of avian influenza (from 2016 to 2018 and in 2020) and African swine fever (from 2018 to 2020).
- The 'better training for safer food' initiative with the objective of improving the effectiveness, efficiency and reliability of official controls could not be implemented as planned in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the vast majority of the planned courses involved face-to-face training in small sessions with participants from across the world. There were 43 contracts to provide training in January 2020, operating until March 2020. Nine e-learning courses were used by more than 5,000 officials worldwide during 2020. These nine courses are currently being updated, while a further six courses are being developed and 10 more are planned for 2021.

Performance assessment

- The Commission considers that the food and feed programme is performing well and has been effectively implemented, contributing to a high level of health for humans, animals and plants by preventing and eradicating diseases and pests. The Court of Auditors in its special report on food safety of 2019 emphasised that the EU’s food safety model in respect of chemicals is considered a point of reference and it is soundly based and respected.
- Significant improvement was achieved with regard to rabies, salmonella infections, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, and bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis.
- Efficient controls were implemented: even though COVID-19 had a significant impact on the implementation of the work programme, 97 audits were carried out in the area of food and feed in 2020, with the participation of eight national experts.
- Emergencies were in general addressed in a timely and effective manner by Member States. A good example of the success of emergency measures is the way the EU dealt with the lumpy skin disease crisis in Greece and Bulgaria through the creation of an EU vaccine bank and the co-financing of vaccines purchased by the Member States. The disease was contained and effectively controlled in the EU (the last outbreak in the EU was in 2017).

Concrete examples of achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rabies</th>
<th>Swine vesicular disease</th>
<th>Salmonella infection</th>
<th>Bovine spongiform encephalopathy</th>
<th>Bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis</th>
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<tr>
<td>has been almost eradicated in the EU in wildlife, with the number of cases falling from 1,602 in 2009 to only 8 in 2018 (in 3 Member States), 5 in 2019 (in 2 Member States) and 12 in 2020 (in the same 2 Member States).</td>
<td>has been eradicated: the entire EU was declared free of swine vesicular disease on 20 March 2019.</td>
<td>programmes proved successful as the number of human cases decreased (from more than 100,000 confirmed human cases of salmonellosis in 2010 to 92,000 in 2019).</td>
<td>cases decreased, from more than 2,000 classic cases detected in 2001 to only 1 detected in 2018; and in 2019, only atypical cases were found (7 cases, in 3 Member States).</td>
<td>cases decreased: 16 Member States were officially free from bovine brucellosis in 2013, rising to 20 in 2018 and 2019; 15 Member States were officially free from bovine tuberculosis in 2013, rising to 17 in 2018 and 2019.</td>
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