



Annual Report 2024

Contributing to public health and wellbeing by promoting food safety and healthy eating on the island of Ireland.



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Welcome from our CEO



At Safefood, we continue to play an active role promoting food safety and healthy eating on the island of Ireland. Our development and sustaining of enduring relationships across public health, north and south, brings real benefit to the public.

When looking back at this year, it's been one of continued global pressures including conflict, migration and climate change which have impacted upon life on our island. And while there have been some improvements to inflation, food prices and food commodities, energy costs continue to put pressure on household budgets. At Safefood, we are committed to making a difference to people's lives. Through our public awareness campaigns, community programmes, innovative training and stakeholder building, we encourage healthier, safer and sustainable food choices by the public and those working across the food chain.

Safefood has a unique role as a North/South body and by building relationships across the food sector, we can help strengthen both the integrity of our island's food chain and improve public health. Our food safety Knowledge Network hosted 31 events this year on topics ranging from food poisoning bacteria to hygiene and allergen management as well as food packaging. Safefood also extended our workshop advisory events into local communities with a focus on everyday food safety education and food hypersensitivity. We were also proud to partner with Northern Ireland's Environmental Health Service at Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council to develop an

informative booklet for the catering industry on food allergies and intolerances as well as 2 instructional videos aimed at caterers and customers living with a food allergy or intolerance. These video resources highlight the importance of good communication between catering staff and the public to ensure that their needs are met and their health is protected. Through sharing knowledge and working partnerships, our networks can deliver better value for the public, whom we all work for, and also support government priorities and policies.

With 80% of all food businesses on the island estimated to be small producers or SMEs, our free eLearning platform 'Safefood for Business' continues to be relevant, flexible and highly popular. Our total number of users almost tripled this year to approximately 14,500 while we saw a three-fold increase in users completing the full programme.

This year also marked the conclusion of our 3-year Community Food Initiative (CFI) Programme 2022-2024, a programme Safefood has been proudly funding since 2010. Designed to positively influence the eating habits of families with children in low-income communities, Safefood's CFIs offer real and practical help. A total of 13 organisations received funding to deliver food education in the community

during this year and more than 14,500 people took part including small projects and community events. The programme further delivered 79 small projects and 74 community events across its duration.

Allied to our CFI community work, we are also at the midpoint of our NI Transform your Trolley 3-year programme in partnership with the Healthy Living Centre Alliance in Northern Ireland. This work supports communities across Northern Ireland with improving their shopping habits and 18 programmes were delivered this year with more than 250 participants taking part.

The work of our All-island Food Poverty Network co-chaired with the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland ensures food poverty and food insecurity is kept firmly front of mind for those in policy development. This year, the Network welcomed Health Minister Mike Nesbitt MLA to its annual event to launch new research on how food poverty is portrayed in policy and the media. Our Obesity Action Forum hosted 2 successful bi-annual events which were attended by more than 300 colleagues who share our commitment to preventing overweight and obesity and building healthier food environments.

Working in partnership is at the heart of what we do at Safefood - it's in our actual corporate DNA. We were delighted this year to extend our partnership with the Irish Football Association in Northern Ireland for a further 3 years to encourage children to make healthy food choices and be more active. This extended partnership aims to reach more than 4,400 primary school children, parents, guardians and teachers each school year until mid-2027.

Our work with Special Olympics Ireland continues through our 'Health@Play' programme - this educational resource was developed by Safefood with Special Olympics health coordinators and brings

health education through sport to children with intellectual disabilities aged 4-15 years within their community clubs and schools. This partnership will reach 5 new clubs across the island each year.

We are also proud of our work with the Libraries Ireland network. Through their 'My Little Book Bag' initiative with the Department of Rural and Community Development, and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 70,000 copies of our story book 'Wash your hands Rufus' were distributed to under 5s and made available in English, Irish, Polish and Ukrainian.

Scientific research is fundamental to our work in food safety and nutrition. This year, 2 new research projects commenced and a further 5 were completed, with topics ranging from the cost of a healthy food basket to the application and management of food allergen information in the catering and hospitality sector on the island. In total, an additional 5 research reports were published this year with topics including food reformulation, mycotoxin control in cereals, and food safety of smart devices when cooking. The work of my colleagues, academics and research teams who've delivered this new research is to be commended and represents a valuable investment in informing policy, addressing knowledge gaps, guiding our awareness campaigns and overall enhancing the health status of the public.

For many people, our public campaigns are the face of Safefood. During the past 25 years, public health campaigns aimed at preventing obesity have largely explored ways of encouraging individual behaviour change, with most interventions focused on ways to help parents improve their children's food choices. During that time, our food environment - the places and spaces where we interact with food - has changed dramatically. As a population, we are encouraged to eat unhealthy food at nearly

every turn we take. We are also bombarded with marketing messages and promotions for unhealthy food and drink, with children in particular being a focus.

Following consultations with our key health services and public health stakeholders, Safefood determined that a shift in public health campaigning was necessary.

Accordingly, this year saw the launch of our new, 5-year campaign – Talk About Food – which aims to raise awareness of our current food environment and why it needs to change. The long term vision for this campaign is to put healthy eating within reach of every child and in every community by transforming the food environment that surrounds them. Early research by Ipsos B&A indicates the campaign is having a strong resonance with the public – almost 1 in 3 adults recalled it and almost 8 in 10 agreed that it made them think about how unhealthy our current food environment is.

To support and enable structural reform in this area, Safefood also established this year a Food Environment Forum, which comprises both Departments of Health (Ireland and Northern Ireland), the Public Health Agency NI, the HSE, the Food Standards Agency NI and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. This collaborative group is charting a 5-year roadmap to deliver policy and community-level changes that promote healthier food environments.

We have continued our work promoting good food safety habits – our ‘Trust the Meat Thermometer’ campaign aired again this year during key seasonal food celebrations of Summer BBQ and Christmas dinner. This enables our campaign to be relevant and contextual to both novice and experienced cooks. The campaign encourages home cooks to use a meat thermometer when cooking specific meats – whole chicken, chicken products, burgers, sausages, meat kebabs and when cooking

Christmas turkey. Meat thermometers are a fail-safe way to check these foods are cooked properly to 75°C, thereby ensuring that any food poisoning bacteria are killed and thus reducing the risk of foodborne illnesses amongst the public.

Safefood’s commitment to digital and social channels to engage and inform the public with trusted, authoritative advice is reflected in our social traffic this year; our website Safefood.net had 4 million page views, our social followers number more than 120,000 and our content on TikTok had more than 30 million views. While these numbers are presently modest in a digital world, we are focused on delivering quality food safety and nutrition advice that is contextual and engaging, accurate and trustworthy. This has never been more important to counter misinformation and disinformation that is increasingly challenging in the context of public health.

We strive to create real and lasting relationships to benefit the public on the island and help them in their daily lives. Working with partners where relevant encourages sharing of knowledge and the best use of valuable but limited resources. I am very grateful to all those individuals, organisations and agencies who worked with us this year and contributed their time, expertise, and enthusiasm to our mission.

My thanks also to our engaged Advisory Board and its Chairperson, Dr Eddie Rooney; their support, wisdom and input is vital to our work in food safety and nutrition. Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to all my colleagues in Safefood – their strength of purpose, dedication and commitment to our work reflects all that is good about true public service.

Dr Gary A. Kearney
Chief Executive Officer



About us

Safefood is an all-island body set up under the British-Irish Agreement Act, 1999. Our role is to promote awareness and knowledge of food safety and nutrition on the island of Ireland.

To do this we:

- provide healthy eating and food safety advice to the public
- carry out research into food safety and nutrition
- promote scientific cooperation and links between laboratories
- provide independent assessment of the food supply
- carry out surveillance of diet-related disease

Working with the public

The public

The public are at the centre of what we do. Whether through our awareness campaigns, our scientific research or our many networks and partnerships, our focus is always on people.

By listening to the public through market research, we strive to meet people where they are and address their concerns. This also allows us to create campaigns and communications that are relatable, relevant, and resonant. Our advice on good food-safety habits and the importance of healthy eating is grounded in the latest independent scientific data. We are further supported by colleagues in our food safety and nutrition teams. Our communications use a mix of traditional and new media channels, together with events, sponsorships, in-store marketing and public relations.

For more on our campaigns see page 10

Research

High-quality, independent and timely research underpins our work to fulfil our remit. We commission scientific research to address knowledge gaps and emerging issues. We use the results across the organisation in our campaigns, partnerships, and programmes. Our research also contributes to policy development and building a knowledge base on the island of Ireland and internationally.

Our research office activities are supported by our Advisory Committee, which brings together experts in food safety and other relevant subjects from across the food chain.

For more on our research and publications see page 21

Food safety

The safe production, supply, and handling of food all along the food chain is critical to our personal health and the islands' economy. At Safefood, our communication campaigns give people the practical advice and information they need to handle and prepare food safely at home. We also support those who produce food by providing relevant eLearning and professional networks. This work builds on our robust scientific research, which also helps us to identify emerging issues in food safety.

As a North South Body, we are uniquely positioned to promote scientific cooperation across the island of Ireland. This draws on food safety professionals from academia, industry, the public sector (including laboratories), as well as other people and organisations with an interest in food safety and nutrition. By building these links, we help strengthen the integrity of our food chain. Our Knowledge Network plays a key role in helping professionals to connect and share their insights and expertise.

For more on the Knowledge Network and food safety programmes see page 31

Nutrition

Overweight and obesity are still two of the greatest public health issues we face as a population, especially among young children.

Being overweight affects people's health and increases their risk of developing life-changing diseases. The stigma attached to being overweight has psychological and social effects on people too, from childhood to adulthood. Our health services and the wider economy are also affected. To address this problem as well as other issues such as food poverty, we work with partners in public health, voluntary and community, research and advocacy sectors.

Our focus on nutrition involves working with stakeholders across the island of Ireland by building a collective evidence-base and developing networks to support our initiatives. We contribute to, and support, policy development and implementation, across the island. We also work with communities to raise awareness and change behaviours by promoting healthy eating and food education.

For more on our nutritional programmes see pages 41

Partnership work

Working to improve behaviours and outcomes in food safety and healthy eating within communities requires teamwork. As a North South body, we understand and value the true meaning of partnership.

Through our communication and awareness campaigns, our trusted scientific research, and our many professional networks and relationships, our commitment to partnership work brings many positive interactions and long-lasting connections, which benefit our work and the public.

For more on Safefood partnership work see page 44





4,817

Kids took part in our sports-based healthy eating programmes

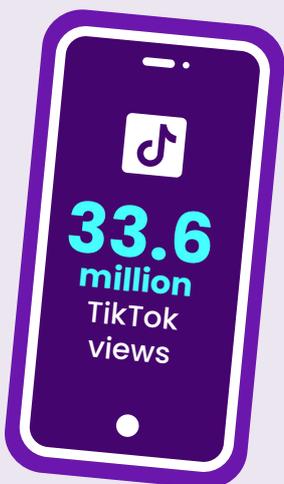


10 Press releases

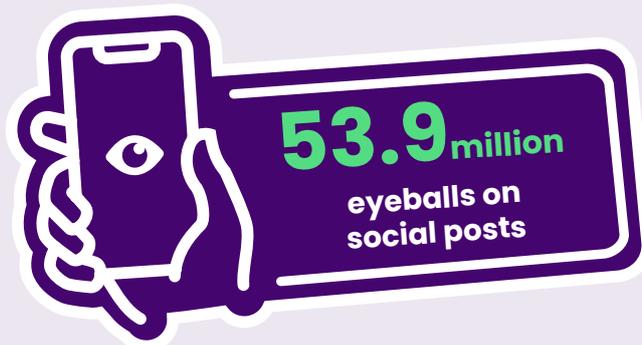


123,133

Social media followers



33.6 million
TikTok views



53.9 million
eyeballs on social posts



5 Research publications

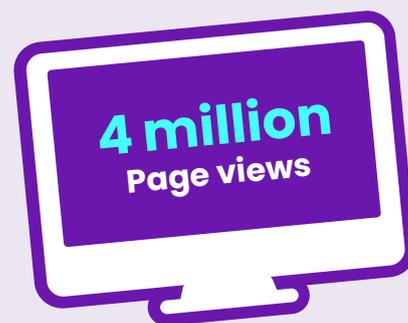
Safefood in 2024



106,202
Publications distributed



2,892
Safefood for Life Exams completed



4 million
Page views



49
events



9,176

New Safefood for Business users



53

Community projects

Our campaigns

At Safefood, our campaigns and communications are developed to empower people with the knowledge to positively influence their behaviour. Our key messages of food safety, food hygiene, and nutrition are communicated using a combination of advertising, digital and social media, public relations, direct marketing, public and professional events, publications, sponsorship, and our website.

This year, our campaigns included a new direction in public health messaging to prevent obesity, promoting important food safety advice during key seasonal occasions, delivering free food safety training online for small food businesses, and launching new scientific research.



Public health campaign – building a healthier food environment

Food-related health problems are the leading cause of preventable disease and early death in the developed world – even more so than smoking. One in 4 children in Northern Ireland, and one in 5 in Ireland, live with overweight or obesity.

This puts them at greater risk of life-altering diseases, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and many common cancers. They are also more likely to experience psychological and social harm during childhood due to weight stigma.

How our food environment affects our health

Over the past 30 years, public health campaigns aimed at preventing obesity have largely explored ways of encouraging individual behaviour changes, with most interventions focused on ways to help parents improve their children's food choices. During that time, our food environment – the places and spaces where we interact with food – has changed dramatically. As a population, we are encouraged to eat unhealthily at nearly every turn. We are bombarded with marketing messages and promotions for unhealthy food and drink, and children in particular are targeted.

About the campaign

Following consultations with our key health services and public health stakeholders on the island, we decided that a shift in public health campaigning was necessary. The first part of this new, 5-year campaign, Talk About Food, aims to raise awareness of our current food environment and why it needs to change. For the long term, the vision for this campaign is to put healthy

eating within reach of every child, in every community, by transforming the food environment that surrounds us.

Our campaign calls on the public to consider the food environment around them, talk about this, and reflect on how the availability, pricing, and promotion of unhealthy food impacts everyone – but especially children.

The campaign illustrates how our current food environment encourages us to eat unhealthily by depicting this world from a child's eye level. Children are particularly vulnerable, with unhealthy food disproportionately promoted, priced, and placed within easy reach and at their eye level.

The campaign consisted of advertising on television, outdoor posters, radio, digital media, and social media. Our social media content included Trusted Voices: real-life stories of families navigating the food environment, alongside expert commentary from doctors, nutritionists and behavioural psychologists. By combining relatable stories from the public with these trusted expert voices, the campaign aimed to make the issue visible, emotional, and urgent.

Laying the foundation for long-term change

To support structural reform, we established a Food Environment Forum in 2024. This brings together the Departments of Health (for Ireland and Northern Ireland), the Public Health Agency Northern Ireland, the HSE in Ireland, the Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. The forum is developing a 5-year roadmap to deliver policy and community-level changes that promote healthier food environments.



Pictured at the launch of the Food Environment campaign (left to right): Dr Aileen McGloin, Director of Nutrition, Safefood; Health Minister Mike Nesbitt MLA; Junior Minister Aisling Reilly MLA; Health Minister Stephen Donnelly TD; and Dr Gary A. Kearney, CEO, Safefood.

Early campaign impacts

Research by Ipsos B&A (September 2024) found that the campaign resonated strongly with the public.

(31%)

of adults recalled the campaign television advert.

(74%)

said it taught them something new about children's exposure to unhealthy food.

(89%)

clearly understood the main message.

(67%)

said the points raised were of concern to them.

(77%)

said it made them think about how unhealthy our food environment is.



The Trusted Voices videos generated **2.87 million views** with **3,199 interactions**, and the ambassadors' videos generated **1.14 million views** with **1,952 interactions**.

Food safety campaign: Trust the Meat Thermometer

To continue our work promoting good food safety habits, our Trust the Meat Thermometer campaign aired again this year. The aim of the campaign is to encourage home cooks to use a meat thermometer when cooking specific meats – whole chicken, chicken products, burgers, sausages, meat kebabs and Christmas turkey. Meat thermometers are a fail-safe way to check these foods are cooked properly to 75°C, thereby reducing the risk of foodborne illnesses.

The campaign focuses on summer barbecues and Christmas dinner as key seasonal occasions to promote food safety messages to those involved in food preparation. This makes our campaign relevant and contextual for both novice and experienced cooks.

Balmoral Show

The Balmoral Show, held in May, is Northern Ireland's largest public event and represented an excellent opportunity to engage with the public about food. This year, we sponsored cookery slots as part of the cookery demonstration kitchen in the Northern Ireland Food Pavilion. Through these live demonstrations, we brought food safety messages directly to the public and encouraged cooks to use a meat thermometer at home.

The cooking spots were publicised on social media and through a radio partnership with U105.

Our food safety advice was also shared by hosts on the Tesco and Marks & Spencer cooking stands, which ensured consistent and coordinated food safety communications across the 4 days of the Balmoral Show.



Summer barbecues

Despite this year's mixed weather affecting sales of barbecue foods, the summer months were still an ideal time for communicating the importance of using a meat thermometer when cooking on a barbecue. The campaign included press and public relations; social media content with creators Nico Reynolds and Rory Martin; and a dedicated section on the Safefood website, with practical content for home cooks.



Pictured: Nico Reynolds (top) and Rory Martin launching the Safefood summer campaigns in Dublin and Belfast.

Christmas turkey

We also communicated seasonal food safety messages during November and December to reinforce the benefits of using a meat thermometer when cooking a turkey for Christmas.

The Christmas campaign also promoted our dedicated online tools for home cooks: the turkey cooking time calculator, which gives precise cooking times for a range of turkey weights and types (whole turkey, stuffed, crown, or boned and rolled); and the Christmas dinner planner, which helps people plan how much food they will need for Christmas Day, to help manage their costs and reduce food waste.

We worked with retail partners for Christmas, with more than 250 grocery shops and high-street butchers participating in the campaign. These stores displayed Safefood Christmas Cooking leaflets, with stickers and other in-store print materials directing shoppers to our online resources.

Chef Gareth Mullins and online cook Maria Harte acted as ambassadors for the campaign in Ireland, featuring in a press photocall and appearing in TV interviews on cooking programmes. In Northern Ireland, chef Niall McKenna partnered on the campaign. To create engagement around our core messages on TikTok and Instagram, the campaign also partnered with online content creator Eric Roberts.



Pictured: Content creator and cook Maria Harte launching Safefood's Christmas food safety campaign.

Campaign results

Balmoral Show

Safefood's social media campaign reached **1.2 million people** with over **85,000 interactions**.

Summer barbeque

Over **1.3 million people** saw the Instagram campaign with over **3,400 engagements**.

More than **30,000 campaign leaflets** were distributed through retail partnerships with Associated Craft Butchers of Ireland, Master Butchers of Northern Ireland, and large Spar, Londis, and Mace stores.

We reached more than 1.2 million people with 17 pieces of unpaid media coverage (TV, radio, print and online).

Christmas campaign

The campaign achieved strong digital and PR results:

9 million people reached on the island of Ireland, with more than **120 mentions** of the campaign in the media

Changing behaviours

21%

Increase in meat thermometer ownership from 2021.



78%

conversions on Turkey Cooking Calculator page
3% increase on 2023.

69%



conversions on the Christmas Dinner Planner page
10% increase on 2023.

50% of those who used a meat thermometer to check their turkey was cooked agreed it was because of advice from Safefood

32% of people who do not currently own a meat thermometer said they intend to buy one (Ipsos B&A survey of **2,006 respondents** on the island of Ireland January 2024)

Safefood for Business

On the island of Ireland, approximately 58,000 businesses produce or sell food. It is estimated that 80% of these are small food producers. We encourage small food businesses to sign up to our free food safety eLearning tool, Safefood for Business, through an advertising campaign on TV, radio, social media, and digital channels.

This year's campaign focused on the key benefits for this sector of using the resource – it's free, flexible for business needs, and fully available online. The campaign also used TikTok for the first time, with content developed by small food business owners themselves.



1. Increase in number of users.



The total number of users nearly tripled, jumping from **5,082** in 2023 to **14,544** in 2024.

2. Safefood full programme.



2024 was a standout year, with **3,202** users completing the full programme (all modules), compared to just **984** in 2023.

3. Users Interaction.



As more users joined, interactions increased, resulting in **1,624** emails exchanged with Safefood.

4. Positive Feedback.



In 2024, we added a feedback form to the course and we were thrilled to receive amazing feedback and suggestions.

Over 2,000 learners shared their feedback

86%

said the course was well organised

86%

found the quizzes easy to use

84%

enjoyed the interactive features

87%

agreed that the instructions were clear

82%

found it easy to navigate through the modules

Our campaigns

Website

This year saw significant changes in the digital environment in which Safefood operates. The introduction of Google's new reporting and analytic tools (GA4); early shift towards Artificial Intelligence (AI) search and ChatGPT and the move by platforms to provide answers rather than links to information will have undoubtedly impacted our web traffic. The full impact of these changes will likely be seen next year.

Despite these changes, web traffic to Safefood.net remained strong for the year, with only a 4% drop in visits and a 3% drop in unique page views compared with 2023. The most visited page was our Turkey Calculator where 78% of visitors made a calculation up 3% on 2023. Our campaign page for barbecue food safety increased to 3rd most visited from 27th in 2023, most likely as a result of our meat thermometer awareness campaigns. With the launch of our new Food Environment campaign this year, the landing page for this was our sixth highest page in terms of page visits. Search engines are still the main way people find our website. By the end of 2024, the website accessibility score was 88% according to the National Disability Authority.



The most-visited page was our turkey cooking time calculator, which also yielded a 3% increase in conversions compared with last year.

Social media

While the social media landscape is always changing, it is now more competitive, expensive and video-driven. This makes it harder to cut through with our content and has put significant demands on our financial and creative resources. It is also more difficult to track success. For this year Safefood focused on managing our online community and engaging our audience.

The launch of our profile on TikTok in December 2023 helped extend our audience reach particularly among young people. The number of people who visited our website through social media content grew by 50% and our total followers increased by 3% to more than 116,000. This was despite Facebook audiences stagnating and decreases in X audiences. The number of times people saw our content increased from 1.8 million in 2023 to 50 million in 2024 largely driven by TikTok. Video views also increased from over 202,000 in 2023 to over 14 million again due to TikTok. Clicks generated by search ads rose by 40% while the cost for each click fell from 0.54% in 2023 to 0.37% in 2024.

In social video content, a new series of 9 recipe and 6 cooking skill videos were produced. These were hosted by chefs Ben Arnold and Diarmuid Ó Mathúna with the videos generating more than 1.47 million views. To mark World Handwashing Day in October, 3 social videos were produced demonstrating good glove hygiene (for catering/hospitality industry) and how to avoid the spread of bacteria. In total, these generated more than 400,000 views.

This year also saw the creation of our first in-house vox pop social videos which were filmed with the public in Belfast and Dublin. These were developed to promote the importance of Vitamin D consumption and generated more than 310,000 views.

To support our food environment campaign, we created Trusted Voices – a series of videos to share on social media. These featured professional experts from the fields of marketing, general practice – medicine, behavioural psychology, and public health nutrition. In the videos, the experts discuss a range of topics such as how children’s perceptions of food are shaped by their environment, food advertising, and the food industry.

In total, the videos attracted more than 50,000 views across Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. When used as YouTube "shorts", they had an average watch rate of 75%, which is encouraging for future developments of the campaign.



Brand refresh

In 2024, we updated our brand guidelines to ensure greater consistency, clarity, and accessibility across all Safefood communications. The refreshed identity modernises our look while helping to ensure that our food safety and healthy eating communications are clearly identifiable.

Our updated brand guidelines are available on our website.

Previous Safefood logo



Updated Safefood logo 2024



Our research

Our promotion of food safety, nutrition, and healthy eating is targeted at the whole food chain. Consequently, so is our research.

One of our primary functions is to “bring about general acceptance that responsibility for the provision of safe food is shared among producers, processors and distributors at all levels, caterers, and the public”.

We consider the entire food chain in our outlook on research, and we ensure that our research programme is linked to, and supports, our primary functions. We use this research to build the evidence base for developing communications (including our public awareness campaigns) supported by science that is clear, authoritative, relevant and independent. This scientific work also enhances our understanding of the potential hazards in the production of food and the measures needed to minimise or eliminate these hazards.

Working with key stakeholders in research and other institutions, we have fostered all-island working relationships and enhanced partnerships between research institutions across the island of Ireland.



Research projects

The following research projects began in 2024.



Are knowledge and behaviours related to food purchase, storage, and cooking in the domestic context affected by the current cost-of-living crisis?

This project:

- examined current consumer perceptions of the cost-of-living crisis
- determined if behaviours in relation to buying, storing, and cooking food at home have changed as a result of the cost-of-living crisis
- identified current food resource management strategies being implemented on the island of Ireland

Results from this study will be used to inform recommendations on knowledge and behaviours related to buying, storing, and cooking at home during the cost-of-living crisis and beyond. The 18-month project included 4 research studies and took place from 1 June 2024 to 30 November 2025.



The application and management of food allergen information for non-prepacked foods by the catering and hospitality sector on the island of Ireland.

This project assesses the challenges faced by different types of food businesses in complying with the allergen information requirements of the Food Information to Consumers regulation, both in Northern Ireland and in Ireland.

The project will be carried out in 2 phases:

Phase 1 will look at how well food businesses adhere to the regulation's requirements for providing allergen information in non-prepacked foods.

Phase 2 will focus on those businesses that have difficulty complying with the legislation. It will also identify the reasons for these difficulties and determine what interventions should be made to improve compliance rates.

The research will be collaborative work, involving researchers from 3 universities: Queen's University Belfast, Technological University Dublin and the University of Birmingham. This multidisciplinary team will employ a range of methodologies to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current practices and challenges associated with managing allergen information in the catering and hospitality industry.

The findings from this project will be crucial for enhancing food safety and supporting businesses in fulfilling their regulatory responsibilities. The duration of the project is 18 months from 1 February 2024 to 31 July 2025.

Projects completed in 2024

The following research projects were completed in 2024 or are due to be published in 2025



Food safety advice for vulnerable patients and residents in healthcare settings on the island of Ireland

This project, carried out by Ulster University, investigated current perceptions, policies, and practices relating to the storage, handling, and safety of high-risk foods brought in to vulnerable patients in healthcare settings on the island of Ireland.



Reducing the exposure of children and adolescents to digital marketing of unhealthy foods

This project, carried out by the Open University, aimed to implement the World Health Organization's CLICK framework to develop a deep, holistic view of how food and drinks are marketed digitally and how this is regulated on the island of Ireland. It also provides a child-rights analysis.



Food messaging to children and adolescents – what works?

This project, carried out by Ulster University, aimed to identify effective food message strategies for children and adolescents on the island of Ireland. The findings will support stakeholders, including Safefood, in developing more effective programmes, interventions, and campaigns using age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate food messaging to bring about real behaviour change.

Communicating food poverty on the island of Ireland



Communicating food poverty – understanding the current discourse on the island of Ireland

Food poverty or insecurity occurs when people and families are unable to afford or access food of a sufficient nutritional value to support good health. Consequently, it is an acknowledged social determinant of health that is associated with multiple negative effects on health and wellbeing for adults and children. Given the media's special role in agenda-setting and its influence in shaping the views and priorities of policy-makers and the public, there is a need to better understand how food poverty is framed in the media and how the issue is perceived and understood by key stakeholders.

This research project, led by the University of Galway, set out a comprehensive plan to shed light on these questions.



What is the cost of a healthy food basket in Ireland and Northern Ireland?

The research objective for this project was to establish the cost of a basket of the minimum essential healthy foods for households who are most at risk of food poverty. This research was conducted by the Minimum Essential Standards of Living Research Centre at St. Vincent de Paul.

Publications

Research reports

We published 5 research reports in 2024.

Food reformulation: the views of the public on the island of Ireland



Food Reformulation: The Views of the Public

This report explores public attitudes towards reformulating 6 types of processed food to make them healthier by reducing how much salt, fat, sugar, and calories they contain.

The findings revealed positive perceptions of reformulation, especially for health benefits, though concerns about taste, cost, and shrinkflation (when an item, such as a bar of chocolate, is sold in a smaller portion but the price stays the same) were significant. Most of the participants preferred transparent communication about changes, with health professionals and government identified as key drivers.

The attitudes, barriers and facilitators to establishing a strong food safety culture in small food businesses.



Establishing a Strong Food Safety Culture in Small Food Businesses

Under new EU regulations, all food businesses must put an appropriate food safety culture in place. This research examined the attitudes towards food safety among small food businesses, and the barriers to and facilitators of establishing a strong food safety culture. As part of the project, several tools and interventions were piloted and evaluated. These included our food safety eLearning resource, Safefood for Business.

Communicating food poverty on the island of Ireland



Communicating Food Poverty – Understanding the Current Discourse on the Island of Ireland

Food poverty or insecurity occurs when people and families are unable to afford or access food of a sufficient nutritional value to support good health. Consequently, it is an acknowledged social determinant of health that is associated with multiple negative effects on health and wellbeing for adults and children. Given the media's role in agenda-setting and its influence in shaping the views and priorities of policy-makers and the public, there is a need to better understand how food poverty is framed in the media and how the issue is perceived and understood by key stakeholders.

Consumers' use of smart devices while preparing food in the domestic kitchen on the island of Ireland



Smart Devices in the Kitchen

This report highlights the widespread use of smart devices, such as smartphones or tablets, in home kitchens on the island of Ireland. Our research demonstrates how these devices can act as vehicles for the cross-contamination of harmful bacteria during food preparation. The report underscores the need for better consumer awareness and hygiene practices, to reduce the food safety risks associated with using these devices in the kitchen.

Mycotoxin control in cereals: safeguarding human food
Technical Project Report



Mycotoxin Control in Cereals: Safeguarding Food

Mycotoxins are naturally occurring toxic compounds produced by certain moulds in cereal crops. This report highlights the ongoing risk of mycotoxin contamination in cereals and the critical importance of comprehensive control measures throughout the cereal supply chain. The report calls for sustained vigilance, robust monitoring, and adherence to best practices and regulations to safeguard the food supply and protect public health on the island of Ireland.

Other publications

The following publications were printed and distributed in 2024.



Healthy Cooking for One leaflet

In partnership with the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) in Ireland, Safefood published a leaflet containing a selection of healthy recipes for people living alone who are struggling to cook healthy meals. The recipes are simple, budget-friendly, and include relevant food safety messages. The leaflet was made available at all MABS offices.



Recipe Ideas leaflet

This leaflet contains quick, simple, and tasty recipe ideas. These recipes were distributed by the Department of Social Protection to charities for use by families in a disadvantaged setting.



Menu Plans for Early Learning and Care Settings

To ensure that the food provided in early years settings supports the development of healthy eating habits in young children, Safefood and the HSE published a two-week menu plan. The resource was distributed to childcare providers by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.



Healthy Lunchbox leaflets for preschool and primary school

These leaflets are designed to support parents who prepare food for their children attending childcare facilities and primary schools. They provide practical tips and ideas on providing a healthy packed lunch. Both leaflets were produced in partnership with the HSE. The pre-school leaflets were distributed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to 110,000 children in Ireland.



101 Square Meals cookbook

In addition to supplying 10,000 printed copies to the HSE, we published a new digital interactive edition of this popular cookbook, which gives practical advice on how to cook nutritious, tasty and affordable meals. The new edition is optimised for mobile phones and is much easier to access and use than the previous editions.



What's in Your Energy Drink?

Safefood's poster on the content of energy drinks was included in a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) textbook – My Wellbeing Journey 3 – which is for Leaving Certificate students. More than 8,000 copies were distributed to secondary schools across Ireland

Our networks

As a North South Body, we are in a unique position to promote cooperation and links between stakeholders working in the food sector, public health, and health promotion. This strengthens the integrity of the food chain and improves public health on the island of Ireland.



Knowledge Network

The Knowledge Network ran 31 events in 2024, attended by approximately 1,400 people. These events focused on topics such as controlling bacteria that cause food poisoning; hygiene; allergen management; and packaging.

Essential food safety workshops

Thirteen workshops on essential food safety were held throughout the year. These workshops aimed to support small food businesses and covered managing and labelling food allergens; controlling food-poisoning bacteria; cleaning and sanitisation; pest control; and HACCP and record-keeping.

The workshops were held in partnership with the Bia Innovator Campus in Athenry in Ireland, and at 11 locations across Northern Ireland, in partnership with district and borough councils. A further workshop for small food businesses, also held at the Bia Innovator Campus, focused on shelf life for food products.

The food safety training was extended to community group representatives in Northern Ireland, with 2 evening events held in partnership with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

Gluten-free living workshops

Two workshops on different aspects of gluten-free living were organised in partnership with the Healthy Living Centre in Creggan, Derry City. These workshops were aimed at people with coeliac disease or gluten intolerance.

Webinars

As part of the collaboration with Food Drink Ireland Skillnet, 2 webinars were delivered for food businesses: one on risk-based thinking and the other on food safety culture. As with the webinars delivered in 2023, these webinars were well attended, with 162 and 276 participants, respectively.

Pest control webinar

Issues with pests feature in every monthly report on enforcement action by the FSAI and they are a significant problem for food businesses. Safefood hosted a webinar entitled Pest Control: Tips and Trips for Food Businesses in October 2024.

Speakers from FSAI and Belfast City Council gave the regulator and Environmental Health Officer (EHO) perspective on the problem. A pest control expert then provided a comprehensive overview of practical aspects of pest control and how to address the issues.



Pictured: Public health laboratory and Safefood staff at the third forum for public health laboratories from across the island of Ireland, held in Dublin on 21 November 2024.

All-island forum for public health laboratory staff

The Knowledge Network continued to support food safety laboratories on the island of Ireland by providing expert witness training and running courses on internal auditing and method validation. Laboratory staff had a chance to network and share their experience and expertise at the public analyst laboratory forum in September and the public health laboratory forum in November.

Dr Niall Delappe presented The Role of Whole Genome Sequencing of Foodborne Pathogens to the public health laboratories, emphasising the significance of whole genome sequencing in identifying and managing outbreaks of illness.

Topics for discussion included the implementation of molecular methods in laboratories; standardising reporting across public health laboratories; and new protocols for testing water samples and confirming the presence of *Clostridium perfringens*.

Food safety culture event

Food safety culture was the theme of a joint event presented by Northern Ireland Food and Drink (NIFDA), Ulster University, and the Institute of Food Science and Technology (Northern Ireland branch). The programme included overviews from the FSA in NI and the FSAI, as well as findings from the Safefood-funded research project on the status of food safety culture in businesses across the island of Ireland.

The event featured input from environmental health officers (EHOs) and representatives from small to medium-sized food businesses, who discussed barriers and facilitators to following legislation. A panel discussion encouraged diverse views and constructive dialogue on the next steps.

The event attracted a broad audience from the food industry, academia, and regulatory bodies.

Masterclass: allergen management

Safefood organised a masterclass in allergen management for catering and hospitality students at the main Cork campus of Munster Technical University on 12 November 2024. This was at the request of the lecturers and followed the masterclasses we carried out at institutes and colleges of further and higher education in 2019 and 2020.

Presentations were given by Dr James McIntosh, Dr Pat O'Mahony of the FSAI and Helen Carney from Environmental Health. Over 100 catering students and staff attended.



All-island Environmental Health Services Forum

The second All-island Environmental Health Services (EHS) Forum was held in Dundalk in November 2024. The success of the first forum in 2023 generated additional interest, with 42 EHOs from across the island attending. EHOs gave presentations on cross-border issues, including an overview of each service, border control, IT systems, and the management of mobile food traders.

The following work-related interactions that resulted from the 2023 forum were highlighted.

Lisburn and Castlereagh Borough Council and Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough Council have cooperated with offices in the HSE National Environmental Health Service concerning the cross-border movement of food products with excessive shelf life, which increases the risk of *Clostridium botulinum*. This direct communication and information-sharing proved beneficial to the HSE EHOs in their efforts to ensure the food businesses comply with the law.

Several cases of food products with inadequate allergen labelling were referred between environmental health services in Ireland and Northern Ireland, and corrective action was taken as a result.

There is an ongoing major investigation in relation to speciation samples of kebab meats taken by EHOs in Ireland that have been referred to both the FSAI and FSA in NI.

There has been cross-border sharing of information on food businesses registered in one jurisdiction but moving into the other jurisdiction.

Other cross-border contact on a variety of issues has stemmed from the forum in 2023. This includes a desire to see "a more informal approach to food complaints

between North and South rather than everything coming through FSA [Food Safety Authority] Incidents".

External speaker Clair Hoare of Biasure presented on allergen management in catering while Dr Lynsey Hollywood and Dr Ruth Price from Ulster University spoke about food safety culture.

Safe production of fermented foods

In December 2024, we hosted a webinar entitled Safe Production of Fermented Foods. The panel of experts included Dr Mary Lenahan and Dr Cormac McElhinney from the FSAI; Robin Sheriff, CEO of the Fermenter's Guild UK; James Read, author and kimchi producer; and Dr Caroline Gilmartin, a fermented foods specialist. The following key topics were discussed: current trends, diversity, and developments in fermented food production; food safety issues specific to fermented foods; practical guidance, best practices, and regulatory updates; insights into challenges in large-scale production; and effective communication of fermentation science.



Knowledge Network publications

The Food Chain magazine

The Knowledge Network published 3 editions of The Food Chain magazine in 2024, reaching more than 2,200 readers. The magazine featured interviews with leading food safety experts and covered a wide range of topics relevant to the sector.



Issue 29 (April 2024):

This issue focused on emerging trends in food safety and regulation. It included an analysis of cannabidiol (CBD) legislation by Nick Hughes; Safefood research on mycotoxins in oats; and consumer use of smart kitchen devices. The issue also promoted the Food Safety Skills Fund Programme and featured news and event updates.



Issue 30 (September 2024):

This issue covered key developments in food production and labelling. Nick Hughes examined vegan food labelling; Dessie Brady discussed the role of robotics in SMEs; and Marion Roeleveld shared insights on maintaining food safety and quality at Killeen Farmhouse Cheese.



Issue 31 (December 2024):

Articles in this issue addressed future challenges in food safety and public health. Highlights included concerns over ultra-processed foods; innovations at the Assured, Safe, and Traceable (ASSET) Technology Centre; risks from plastic packaging chemicals; and a day-in-the-life feature with Colm Walsh. The issue also included Knowledge Network news and events.



Issue 31 was the final edition of The Food Chain magazine. From 2025 onward, content will be merged with our monthly e-newsletter, Network News, in support of our sustainability goals.

Network news

The monthly e-bulletin, Network News, provided regular updates on food safety news, Knowledge Network activities, external resources, reports and opportunities.

During 2024, 12 Network News bulletins were disseminated to those on the Knowledge Network mailing list

Thought leader articles

The Knowledge Network published 5 articles on the Future of Food in 2024. These articles delved into pressing issues in the food chain, such as the rise and evolution of urban agriculture, the ambiguity of vegan food labelling and its risks for allergy sufferers, and the overlooked impacts of climate change on food safety.

Other articles highlighted new research into harmful mycotoxins in cereals and the regulatory challenges posed by the rapidly growing CBD industry.



Bursaries and sponsorships

Food safety skills fund

The Food Safety Skills Fund programme supported 6 participants from organisations involved in food production and food safety across the island of Ireland. The funding made it possible for them to attend workshops, conferences and training, to upskill in their respective fields.

Food safety and nutrition bursaries and sponsorships

- Clodagh Lynch received the Best Food Safety Essay Award for her paper entitled *Is Seaweed Safe to Eat? Navigating Contamination Concerns for Sustainable Nutrition* as part of her BSc in Food Quality, Safety, and Nutrition at Queen's University Belfast.
- Emma McNeilly achieved the highest result in the Applied Sensory Science and Quality Control module of her BSc in Consumer Management and Food Innovation at Ulster University.

Safefood bursaries were awarded to the best graduate students from each of the 2 environmental health universities on the island of Ireland: Ulster University and Technical University Dublin (TUD). The awards were presented at the Environmental Health Association of Ireland Forum in Tullamore in May.

Ulster University's winning food safety final year essay was by Niamh McGuckian: A study into the diet choices made by male personnel within the construction industry throughout Northern Ireland.

TUD's winning food safety final year essay was by Sinéad Oshokoya: Assessing the benefits and risks of the consumption of macroalgae.

Other sponsorships and collaborations included:

- Nutrition Exchange programme
- Irish General Practice Nurses Educational Association
- Nutrition Society post-graduate meeting
- Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute
- European Public Health Nutrition Alliance

Food hypersensitivity

We updated the resource for food businesses entitled Food Allergy and Intolerance: Guidance for the Northern Ireland Catering Industry and republished it as an interactive eBook. This was done in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Environmental Health Service at Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough Council.

The book covers what the catering industry in Northern Ireland needs to know about food allergies and intolerances, and how to keep their customers safe. The eBook edition can be accessed on mobile devices.

Allergies and intolerance guide

In collaboration with Craigavon Borough Council, we produced 2 instructional videos aimed at caterers and those with a food allergy or intolerance. The videos highlight the importance of good communication between catering staff and customers to ensure customers' needs are met and their health is protected.

The videos were promoted by the Northern Ireland Environmental Health Service and tie in with the FSA in NI's Don't Be Afraid to Ask campaign, which encourages dialogue between catering staff and customers who have food allergies.



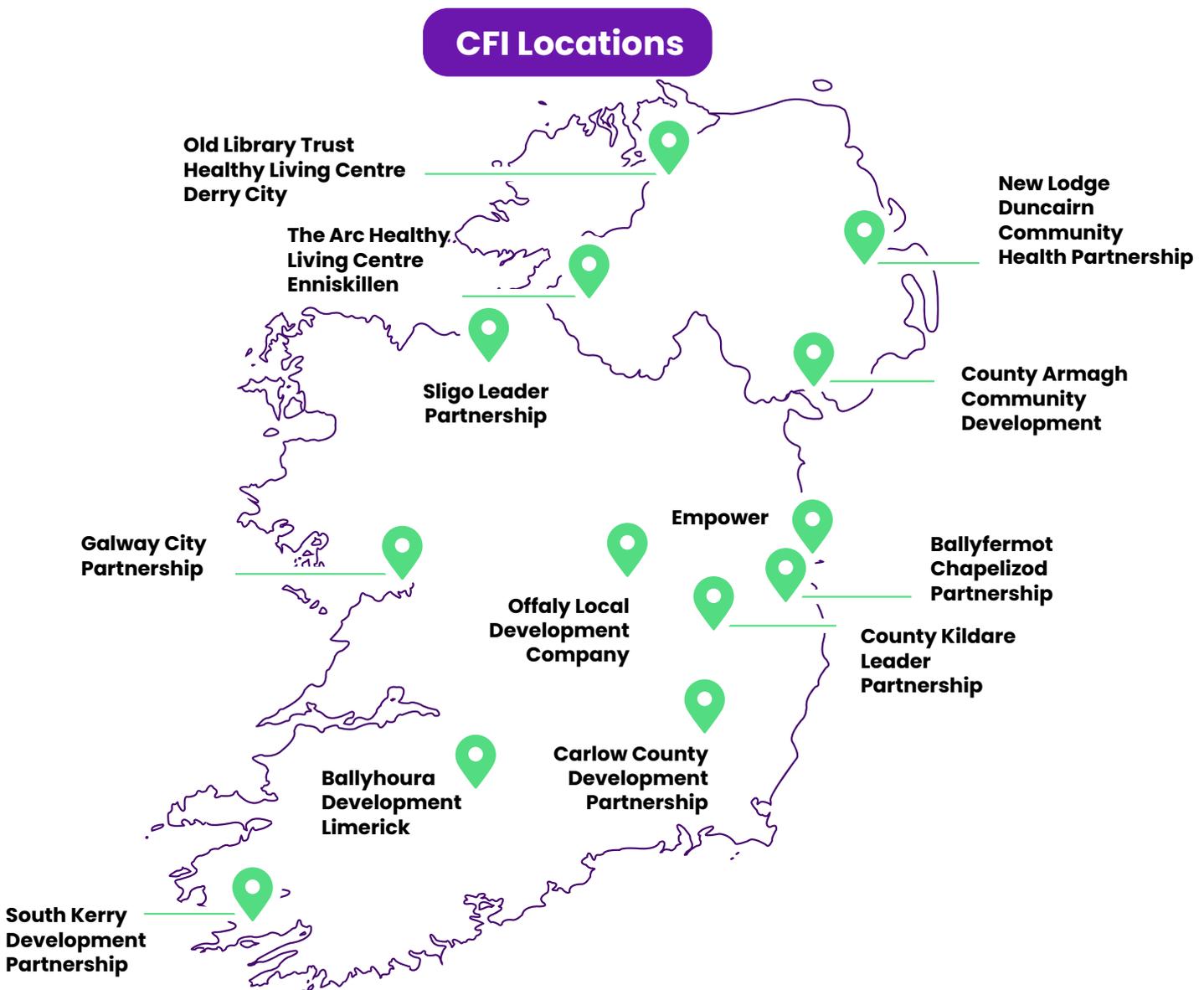
Community Food Initiatives

The Community Food Initiatives (CFI) programme empowers people in low-income communities to make healthier food choices. We fund local projects that improve access to healthy and safe food, using a community-development approach.

Since the programme began in 2010, more than 65,000 people have taken part in CFI activities and gained practical tips on food and healthy eating, healthier shopping, and cooking.

The 2022–2024 programme

The 2022–2024 CFI programme ran for 3 years and concluded in 2024. We funded 13 organisations to deliver programmes during this time. In total, more than 14,500 people took part in a CFI activity. The programme delivered 79 small projects, 74 community events, and 52 CFI at Home projects.



Making a difference

Evaluation of the programme found that it benefited people who took part by:

- improving their knowledge and skills about food and healthy eating
- boosting their confidence in cooking and food skills, including meal planning, shopping smartly, budgeting, and food safety
- linking them to helpful programmes and services outside the CFI programme
- providing emotional and social benefits: participants could meet new people and learn new skills as part of a group, fostering a sense of community

Organisations that had taken part in the programme made presentations on the work they had carried out.

Events for CFI programme leaders

Two events are organised every year for the CFI leaders to network, share experiences, and gain knowledge.

The first event in 2024, held in May, discussed community facilitation skills. The second event, held in October, marked the end of the programme.

Planning for the next CFI programme

In May, 2 formative research workshops were held to review key elements of the CFI programme and explore what was working well and areas for improvement. One workshop included key food poverty stakeholders (the HSE, the Department for Communities, the Public Health Agency, and the Healthy Living Centre Alliance). The other workshop included community workers, such as CFI programme leaders, and community food and nutrition workers. The information gathered was combined with learnings from previous evaluations of the CFI programme to create the proposal for the 2025–2028 programme.





All-island Obesity Action Forum

The All-island Obesity Action Forum (AIOAF) is a community of professionals who have a shared interest in preventing and treating obesity. The forum provides a platform for partnership and cohesive working on the island of Ireland by promoting networking, collaboration, and exchange of best practice. Members have access to twice-yearly all-island events and a monthly newsletter.

Tackling obesity stigma

The AIOAF met twice during the year, with one of the main points of discussion being its position statement on obesity stigma, launched in March 2023. Since the launch, members have been striving to address obesity stigma within their organisations. Actions taken in response to the statement have been collected and will be shared to demonstrate the forum's ongoing commitment to addressing obesity stigma. The statement was developed with members to set out how the forum will address obesity stigma, covering areas such as people-first language and non-stigmatising images.

Obesity stigma refers to the negative attitudes and beliefs associated with obesity including bias, discrimination, stereotyping, and social exclusion. People living with obesity experience stigma across several settings, and it has negative effects on their physical and mental health.

Forum events

Safefood hosted the first AIOAF event of the year in June, titled The Impact of Obesity on Fertility, Pregnancy, and Beyond. The event attracted a total of 187 participants, online and in person, and the recorded version has since been viewed an additional 264 times.

The event featured a range of expert speakers. Professor Nicola Heslehurst (Newcastle University) presented on the impact of obesity before, during, and after pregnancy, offering a comprehensive overview of the evidence surrounding maternal obesity across the life course. John Jordan, a patient advocate from Northern Ireland, shared his lived experience of how obesity affected his and his partner's journey to parenthood and the lasting impact on his family. Dr Rosie Dawson (South Tees NHS Trust) introduced the Lifestyle, Intervention, Fertility, Togetherness (LIFT) intervention, which approaches pre-conception lifestyle change from a unique perspective. Professor Sharleen O'Reilly (University College Dublin) delivered a presentation titled Nudging New Habits: Behaviour Change for Healthy Weight Management in Pregnancy and Beyond, which highlighted research from the Bump2Baby and Me trial.



All Island Obesity Action Forum Q&A session

In November, the forum hosted its second event, a webinar entitled How Everyday Spaces Impact Obesity. It explored how the places and spaces we occupy affect our obesity risk and highlighted the various initiatives, programmes, and policies aimed at reducing this risk.

Charlene Brooks (Belfast Healthy Cities) gave a presentation entitled Urban Wellness: Advancing Healthy Transport and Green City Initiatives. The presentation considered the importance of active travel through initiatives such as walking buses, and engaging children in their own health and environment through initiatives such as the Pharmacy Schools programme and Healthy Places, Healthy Children.

Sharon Daly (Irish Rail) discussed workplace-based interventions and embedding a culture of health and wellbeing in Irish Rail. The presentation provided an overview of the approach being taken in Irish Rail to support and embed a healthy workplace environment.

Dr Gesche Kindermann (University of Galway) gave a presentation on the health benefits of green and blue spaces. It looked at research on access to and use of blue and green spaces for health and wellbeing in Ireland, the role of socioeconomic determinants in this, and how barriers to using blue and green spaces can be addressed.

The event was attended live by **137 participants**, with an additional **52 viewing** the recording since then.

Forum publications

In 2024, the forum published 10 editions of The All-Island Obesity News to a list of 820 subscribers. This newsletter aims to support the forum's work by promoting information sharing and exchanging best practice. It also highlights obesity-related events, news, reports, and research.

All-island Food Poverty Network

First established in 2009, the All-island Food Poverty Network is a community of professionals working across government departments and agencies, academia and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who have a shared interest in reducing food poverty on the island of Ireland. It supports the development of consensus on related issues, collaboration, and shared learning. The network is co-chaired by Safefood and the FSA in NI.

Network events

The network hosted its annual event in September in Belfast, with 47 attending in-person and 101 joining online. The event explored the current conversation on food poverty on the island of Ireland. Speakers discussed effective ways to talk about food poverty, and shared interventions that are creating change in their communities. The event was opened by Health Minister Mike Nesbitt MLA, who spoke of the need to take a shared approach to tackling food poverty.



Pictured: Health Minister Mike Nesbitt MLA with staff from Safefood and the FSA NI and speakers from the All Island Food Poverty Network at the network annual event.

Dr Elena Vaughan from the University of Galway shared findings from Safefood-funded research. The research explores how food poverty is portrayed in policy and the media on the island of Ireland. It aims to understand how this portrayal shapes public knowledge and influences policy debates.

Paul Doherty shared the story of Foodstock, a community response to poverty in Belfast, which supports the community through wraparound services. These include food, a community café, employment and benefits advice, and more.

Sophie Gordon from FrameWorks UK shared insights, guidance, and practical tips for communicating about food, poverty, and health. She also discussed framing communications in ways that build understanding and support for solutions.

Network publications

Two issues of the All-island Food Poverty Network Newsletter were published in 2024, with a 13% increase in subscribers during the year.

Partnership working

Working in partnership is at the heart of our role as a North South Body. In our communication campaigns, scientific research, and professional networks, our partnership approach brings many positive connections and long-lasting relationships on the island of Ireland.



Irish Football Association

In 2024, we were delighted to extend our partnership with the Irish Football Association (IFA) for a further 3 years. The 2 organisations have been working together since 2021 to encourage children to make healthy food choices and to be active. Through this extended partnership, we are set to reach 4,400 primary school children, parents, guardians, and teachers in each school year up until mid-2027.

IFA update:

4,716

children were involved

Also arising from the partnership, Belfast's Windsor Park stadium facilitated healthy eating workshops for visiting schools. The Safefood education room was equipped with a sensory starter pack to create a sensory-friendly environment so that the room was an inclusive space for autistic people and those living with sensory disorder or cognitive impairment.

120

programmes delivered

As part of the partnership, in the autumn we began pitch-side advertising at Windsor Park, displaying the Safefood logo at 3 men's international fixtures.

98%

satisfaction rate reported by teachers

Pictured: Northern Ireland internationals Demi Vance and Kerry Beattie join pupils from St Patrick's Primary School in Ballynahinch to celebrate the extension of the partnership between Safefood and the IFA.





Libraries Ireland

Safefood's storybook for children starting primary school, *Wash Your Hands, Rufus*, was included in the My Little Library Bag initiative, where books are distributed through the Libraries Ireland network. Part of the First 5 Strategy, this initiative is a collaboration between libraries; the Department of Rural and Community Development; and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

We provided 70,000 copies of the book to libraries in several languages: English, Irish, Polish and Ukrainian.

Special Olympics Ireland

Our partnership with all-island organisation Special Olympics Ireland continues through our Health@Play programme. This educational resource was developed by Safefood with Special Olympics health coordinators. It brings health education through sport to 4 to 15 year old children with intellectual disabilities within their community clubs and schools. This partnership is reaching 5 new clubs across the island each year.

This year, Safefood gave a cookery demonstration to athletes as part of Special Olympics Ireland's first ever HealthFest event to mark Women in Sport Week.



Cross-border community event

In November, we held a cross-border event for communities working together in Ireland and Northern Ireland through the Safefood cross-border pilot. The event took place at the O'Fiach Heritage Centre in Cullyhanna and marked the successful conclusion of the pilot. The pilot was led by the Rural Health partnership in Newry and delivered in partnership with Clones Hen's Shed in Monaghan and the Connect Family Resource Centre in Drogheda.



Pictured: Safefood staff and Advisory Board members at the cross-border community event.



Collaborating with colleagues across Europe

On 15 November, we presented at a lunchtime symposium that focused on the current food environment in Europe, attended by 120 delegates. Our presentation focused on examples of good practice across Europe (including the island of Ireland), the Safefood #letstalkaboutfood campaign, and the stakeholder work through the Healthier Food Environment Forum.

Science communication in the post-truth era

On 21 November, we participated in a webinar titled Science Communication in the Post-Truth Era on behalf of the European Public Health Nutrition Alliance (EPHNA). The webinar was delivered to The Finnish Society for Nutrition Research and the Society for Social Medicine.

We spoke about addressing the obesity stigma, while our European Union colleagues covered the challenges of incorporating sustainability into dietary guidelines.

Let's champion food

On 4 September, we supported the Annual Study Day for the Northern Ireland branch of the Hospital Catering Association in Belfast. We presented an overview of our aims and activities at the event, where the theme was: Let's Champion Food. We also had a publicity stand at the event, to promote Safefood for Business.

Transform your Trolley

We continued to work with the Healthy Living Centre Alliance to deliver Transform Your Trolley. This programme supports communities across Northern Ireland to improve their shopping habits. It provides practical support with creating a balanced shopping list, meal planning, how to eat well on a budget, how to cook basic nutritious meals, making use of leftovers, and food safety and hygiene.

Events in 2024

Year 2 of the 2023–2025 Transform Your Trolley programme was launched on 19 September in Bellaghy, County Derry. Participating Healthy Living Centres were invited to join Safefood and the Healthy Living Centre Alliance.

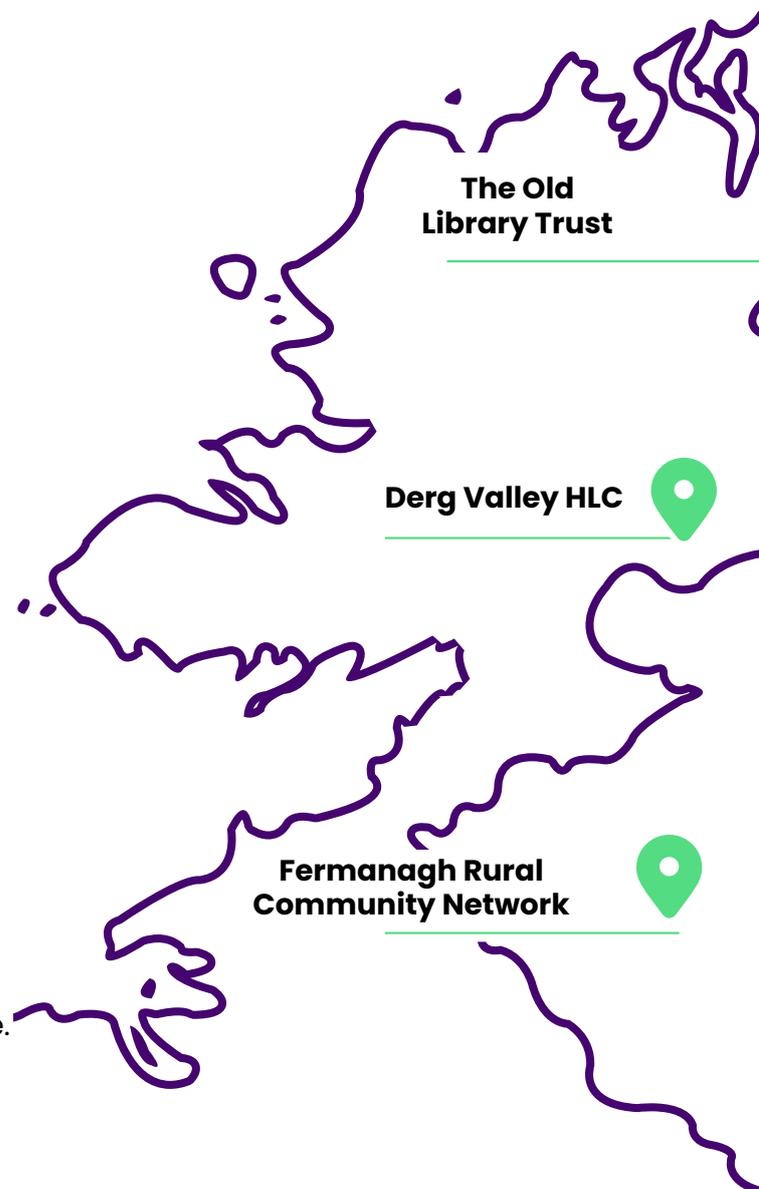
At the launch event, Julie White from the Old Library Trust gave an overview of the programme to date, and Anne Parle from Safefood summarised the resources available from Safefood (print and digital) to support the programmes. A discussion then took place on learnings from previous years and plans for 2024.



Eighteen programmes were delivered in 2024, and more than 260 participants took part. All the participants felt the programme had changed the way they and their family will eat in the future.

Making a difference

- Participants reported improvements in their knowledge and behaviours around food, cooking, and food safety.
- After completing the programme, the majority of participants said that they check and compare nutrition and food labels "sometimes", "most of the time", or "all the time", compared with the majority reporting that they did this "never", "rarely", or "sometimes" at the beginning of the programme.
- Upon completing the programme, there was a shift in participants preparing homemade meals, with the majority stating that they did so between one and 4 days a week at the beginning of the programme but did so between 4 and 7 days a week by the end of the programme.
- At the end of the programme, more participants said that they get their 5 daily servings of fruit and vegetables "sometimes", "most of the time", or "just about every day".
- Participants reported eating more servings of fruit and vegetables each day after completing the programme. The majority stated that they were eating 3 to 5 portions a day, compared with zero to 3 portions a day at the beginning of the programme.
- Participants' confidence in key food skills increased after taking part in the programme. They were more confident about writing shopping lists, reading and understanding food labels, planning meals and snacks, and preparing homemade meals.





Our governance

The services provided by our Corporate Operations team span the areas of accounting and finance, procurement, human resources, information technology, legal, governance, compliance, and audit. These all contribute to facilitate the efficient and effective delivery of Safefood's business goals and strategy.



Advisory Board

The Advisory Board held 6 meetings during the year with one each in Cork, Belfast, and Cookstown, and 3 in Dublin. Some meetings included remote attendance. Attendance details, and fees paid to members of the Advisory Board, are included on page 61.

Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee comprises 2 members of the Safefood Advisory Board and 2 external members, one of whom chairs the committee. The external members are Mr. Alan Myles (Chairperson) and Ms. Mairead Ní Chéadagain. Both external members of the committee have extensive relevant professional experience. During 2024, the Audit and Risk Committee met 4 times, with 2 meetings held remotely and 2 meetings in person (one each in Cork and Dublin).

The Audit and Risk Committee engages external professional auditors to conduct a programme of internal audits. The committee also reviews the risk register at each meeting for completeness and to ensure that all appropriate steps to control and mitigate risks are in place.

Safefood's external audit is carried out jointly by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General in Ireland and the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The Audit and Risk Committee has an independent role in the provision of assurance to the CEO (as accounting officer) and the Advisory Board on internal control, risk management, and audit and assurance matters. This is part of the systematic review of our internal controls and governance procedures.

Audit and Risk Committee membership and attendance

	2024 Meetings attended (Total held 4)	2023 Meetings attended (Total held 4)
Alan Myles (Chairperson)	4	3
Mairead Ní Chéadagain	4	4
Alex Attwood	4	4
Elizabeth Keane	4	4

Human rights and equality and diversity and inclusion

Safefood is required to comply with equality and human rights legislation in both jurisdictions. We are fully committed to fulfilling these obligations through a proactive approach to equality and human rights issues in all aspects of our work and by providing a working environment free from unlawful discrimination, victimisation, and harassment.

Equality

Safefood's Equality Scheme was approved by the Northern Ireland Equality Commission in September 2011 and is reviewed every 5 years. The current scheme runs from 2023 to 2028. As part of the review, we carry out an audit of inequalities, and we prepared a Section 75 Action Plan for 2023–2025.

Safefood issues a Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Progress Report to the Equality Commission each year.

Disability

Safefood's Disability Action Plan 2021–2025 is a statement of our commitment to promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

The plan outlines measures to ensure that equality of opportunity is achieved, with regular monitoring and an annual report on progress towards delivering on these commitments submitted to the Equality Commission (NI).

We report annually to the Monitoring Committee of the Department of Health in Ireland in relation to the employment of people with disabilities.

Regular training is provided to all staff to encourage awareness of disability and equality issues and Safefood actively

encourages people with disabilities to apply for roles in the organisation.

Diversity and inclusion

We are also committed to the ethos of diversity and inclusion throughout our work. At the core of our philosophy is the belief that our main role is to enhance and improve relationships throughout the island of Ireland through a communicative and partnership approach to our work. Equality objectives and commitments are mainstreamed into our main strategic and operational business plans.

As of 31 December 2024, the Advisory Board was comprised of 10 members (8 members in 2023), of which 50% were female (37.5% in 2023), with 2 positions vacant. The Board therefore met the Irish Government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards.

Advisory committee

Safefood is assisted by an Advisory Committee of experts with a broad range of professional expertise, experience and backgrounds. Membership of the committee is voluntary, and the overarching role of the members is to provide technical advice and guidance to assist us in setting strategy and successfully delivering on the elements of our 3-year corporate and annual business plans.

The Advisory Committee complements Safefood's Advisory Board, and both structures are appointed by the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC).

The 3-year term of service for the outgoing Advisory Committee concluded on 2 October 2023, with a final meeting on 29 September that year. We issued a call for expressions of interest in membership of our Advisory Committee in May 2024. Applicants were assigned to one of 7 categories of professional expertise.

Following the selection process, we sent a list of recommended appointees to the Departments of Health in Ireland and in Northern Ireland, who then sent the final list of appointees to the NSMC for approval.

A new Advisory Committee, with 11 members, was appointed at the NSMC Health Sectoral meeting on 14 May 2025 for a term of 3 years.

Protected disclosures

Under Section 22 of the Protected Disclosure Act 2014, we must publish a report each year on the number of protected disclosures made in the preceding year. We must also publish information about any actions taken in response to protected disclosures made. No protected disclosures were received by Safefood in the reporting period up to 31 December 2024.

Provision of information to members of the Oireachtas and members of the Assembly

We have a procedure in place to ensure that best practice standards and principles are adhered to when responding to queries from and providing information to Members of the Oireachtas and Members of the Assembly.

All queries must be acknowledged and responded to within the timeframe requested or within 15 working days if a response date is not specified. During 2024, we received 13 Parliamentary or Assembly Questions, and all were responded to within the timeframe requested.

Business Plan 2025

Safefood submitted our 2025 Business Plan to both sponsor departments in 2024. This was approved by the NSMC on 14 May 2025.

Declaration of interests

Each year, members of the Advisory Board, the Audit and Risk Committee, the senior management team and the Advisory Committee complete a declaration of interests. A Register of Interests is maintained and is available on request.

Engagement with key stakeholders

- The CEO and directors of Communications and Nutrition met with the Minister for Public Health in Ireland, Hildegard Naughton, in January 2024 to provide the Minister with an introduction to Safefood.
- Also in January, the CEO and directors attended the launch of an exhibition celebrating the 25th anniversary of the North South Bodies, in the Ulster Museum Belfast.
- In February, the CEO attended a meeting of the CEOs of all North South Bodies, arranged by the NSMC Secretariat in Armagh.
- In March, Safefood attended the Northern Ireland Food and Drinks Association's Awards ceremony in Belfast. Also in March, the CEO and the Director of Corporate Operations attended a meeting of the NSMC Secretariat and sponsor departments in Armagh.
- In April, the CEO signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.
- In June, the Chairperson of the Advisory Board, the CEO, and the Director of Nutrition attended the Health and Food Safety Sectoral meeting of the NSMC in Armagh. Also in June, the CEO met

with the CEO of the Centre for Effective Services, an all-island organisation established in 2008 to enable good-quality research and evidence among policy-makers and practitioners.

- In July, the CEO and the Director of Nutrition attended the Committee of Health in Dublin.
- In August, Minister of State at the Department of Health Ireland, Colm Burke, visited our Head Office in Cork.
- In December, the CEO and the Director of Nutrition attended an event in Armagh, hosted by the NSMC, to celebrate 25 years of North South Bodies working together. The event was also attended by An Taoiseach, An Tánaiste, and the Lord Mayor of Armagh.

Climate action progress

Our Climate Action Roadmap 2024 documents how Safefood aims to meet the commitments made by the governments of Northern Ireland and Ireland to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The roadmap includes commitments under the following headings:

- leadership and governance for climate action
- engaging our people
- achieving our carbon target
- achieving our energy efficiency target
- energy and environmental management systems
- greening our procurement
- baselining and reducing resource use
- improving our buildings
- our wider climate action plans

In 2024, many of the core activities identified in our first roadmap (in 2023) moved to a "maintain and monitor" status.

Opportunities for building improvement within the new lease for the Cork office were a focus for the CEO and the senior team. The in house Green team identified 3 specific projects relating to documentation of staff travel options, development of sustainability guidance for events, and the development of guidance for sustainable paper use. Subgroups from across the organisation were set up to drive this activity.

The in house Green Team continued to spearhead the fusion of relevant sustainability goals into Safefood programmes and campaigns. In 2023 we began using the Sustainability Energy Authority of Ireland's public sector monitoring and reporting system to track progress towards energy-efficiency and energy-related carbon targets. With data available from 2009 as a baseline, our energy efficiency, measured as the Energy Performance Indicator, demonstrates that our energy performance has improved by 62.6% since the baseline. This exceeds the current Irish Government target of a 50% reduction before 2030.

Green criteria and guidance have been set for procurement for Safefood, and green criteria are now included in our tender assessments.

Official Languages Act

Under the Official Languages Act, we must report each year on our compliance with the Act and include a summary in our annual report. In particular, we must ensure that:

- at least 20% of any advertising placed in any year is in the Irish language
- at least 5% of any money spent on advertising in any year is used to place advertising in the Irish language through Irish-language media

In 2024, we achieved the following results. 26.93% (23% in 2023) of our advertising was in the Irish language – more than the 20% threshold. 4.70% (2.17% in 2023) for the budgetary spend to Irish language media – just under the 5% threshold (more details below).

Safefood endeavoured to meet the 5% minimum spend through Irish-language media as outlined in the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. The spending increased notably from 2.17% in 2023 to 4.7% in 2024, falling only slightly short of the 5% target. An Coimisinéir Teanga confirmed that the 4.7% spend is regarded as compliant under the Act.

The Act also sets requirements for recorded oral announcements, written materials, signs, publications, logos, names, addresses and titles. Additionally, it requires that, by 2030, at least 20% of staff are proficient in Irish and it calls for a survey on the Irish-language skills of staff to be conducted in 2027.

We have taken measures to ensure we comply with these obligations throughout 2024. Our HR team will implement a roadmap to achieving the target of 20% of staff having Irish-language competency by 2030 and to assess staff competency in the Irish language by 2027.

Remuneration report

For the year ended 31 December 2024

Remuneration policy

Safefood's remuneration policy is to mirror the public sector salaries and terms and conditions for all staff. The appropriate pay scales for each grade contain a number of pay points from minima to maxima, allowing progression towards the maxima.

Service contracts

All senior management and key appointments are made in accordance with Safefood's recruitment policy, which requires the appointment to be on the basis of suitability and competence.

All staff receive a contract of employment on appointment, which details their terms and conditions. Termination payments are in accordance with these terms and conditions. During 2024 there were no termination, compensation or severance payments made.

Remuneration and pension entitlements (Audited Information)

The North/South Implementation Bodies Annual Reports and Accounts Guidance, issued jointly by the Department of Finance (DOF) in the North and the in the South, requires the Department of Public-expenditure infrastructure public-service reform and digitalisation (DPER) disclosure of the remuneration and pension entitlements of certain senior staff members.

The Key Management Team consists of the Chief Executive Officer, the Director of Corporate Operations, the Director Communications, the Director of Food Safety and the Director of Nutrition.

The remuneration of the CEO in 2024 was € 134,835 (GBP£112,072), 2023: €130,774 (GBP£113,746).

The total remuneration paid to the Key Management Team in 2024 amounted to €567,681.52 (GBP£480,611), 2023 €513,716 (GBP£446,825).

*Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay, and benefits in kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions, or the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

Benefits in kind

There were no benefits in kind provided to key management or staff in 2024 or 2023. In recognition of the 25-year anniversary of Safefood, a voucher in the amount of €250 was awarded to 29 members of staff. There were no other benefits in kind provided to key management or staff in 2024 or 2023.

Bonuses

It is not the policy of Safefood to make any bonus payments to members of the key management team or to staff. No bonus payments were made in 2024 or 2023.

Fair Pay Disclosures (Audited Information)

Pay ratios

Safefood is required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest-paid director in Safefood in the 2024 financial year was €130,000 - €140,000 (2023, €130,000- €140,000). The relationship between the mid-point of this band and the remuneration of the organisation's workforce is disclosed below.

	2024 €	2023 €	2024 GBP£	2023 GBP£
Band of Highest Paid Director's Total Remuneration* (£000)	130-140	130-140	112-120	112-120
Median remuneration of staff	58,960	63,249	48,888	55,170
Ratio	2.29	2.06	2.29	2.06
Range of staff remuneration	€13,000 to €136,000	€24,000 to €131,000	£11,000 to £114,000	£21,000 to £114,000

The remuneration of the highest paid director in 2024 was €134,835 (GBP£112,072), 2023: €130,774 (GBP£113,746). This was 2.29 (2023:2.06) times the median salary of the workforce which in 2024 was €58,960 (GBP£48,888), 2023: €63,429 (GBP£55,170).

Pension benefits (Audited Information)

Pension Entitlements – Officials

	Accrued pension at pension age as at 31/12/24 and related lump sum	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age	CETV at 31/12/24	CETV at 31/12/23	Real increase in CETV	Employer contribution to partnership pension account
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
Gary Kearney	55-60 plus lump sum of 170 - 175	2.5-5 plus lump sum of 10-15	1,423	1,295	128	-

The Cash Equivalent Transfer Values (“CETVs”) are not guaranteed and are for illustrative purposes only. CETVs have been calculated based on estimated pension benefits as at 31 December 2023 and 31 December 2024. Salaries shown above are as at 31 March 2024. Members within the Final Salary and Alpha categories will see their benefits for the Remedy Period, which spans from the 1st of April 2015 to the 31st of March 2022, represented as Final Salary.

Notes on table

The North/South Implementation Bodies Annual Reports and Accounts Guidance, issued jointly by the Department of Finance (DOF) in the North and the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER) in the South, requires the disclosure of the remuneration and pension entitlements of certain senior staff members. Based on the Board’s assessment that making those disclosures would be a breach of data protection legislation Safefood has not made those disclosures. The CEO has consented to disclosure of remuneration and pension entitlements as shown below and under pension benefits.

Pension arrangements

All staff and management are members of the North/South Pension Scheme which was established by the North/South Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Limited with effect from 29 April 2005.

It is a defined benefit pension scheme which is funded annually on a pay as you go basis from monies provided by the UK and Irish Exchequers. Funding is provided to the Body by the Department of Health in the South and the Department of Health in the North. The scheme is administered by an external administrator.

Cash equivalent transfer values

The Cash Equivalent Transfer Values (“CETVs”) are not guaranteed and are for illustrative purposes only. CETVs have been calculated based on estimated pension benefits as at 31 December 2023 and 31 December 2024.

Real increase in cash equivalent transfer values

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any

benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

Compensation for loss of office (Audited Information)

None in year.

Board Members' Remuneration (Audited Information)

	2024 €	2023 €	2024 GBP£	2023 GBP£	2024 Meetings Attended (6 Held)	2023 Meetings Attended (6 Held)
Edmond Rooney	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	6	6
Damien McCallion (Deputy Chair)		-			4	4
Alex Attwood	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	6	6
Teresa Canavan	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	6	6
Irene Collins	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	6	5
Maeve Henchion *						4
Elizabeth Keane	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	6	6
Alan Lewis	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	3	4
Sinead McCarthy **						4
Kenneth McKenzie	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	5	5
Elaine Clohosey ***	0-10		0-10		4	4
Elaine Mooney ***					4	5

* Retired October 2023

** Retired October 2023

*** Appointed April 2024

6 meetings of the Advisory Board were held in 2024 (2023: 6). The total amount of fees paid to Advisory Board members in 2024 was €57,097/ GBP£48,340 (2023 €50,587/GBP£44,001) and the National Insurance Contribution in 2024 was €0/£0 (2023 €0/£0). No Benefits in Kind were provided to Senior Management or Advisory Board Members. In 2024 a total of €3,721 / GBP£3,150 (2023 €4,249/GBP£3,705) was claimed by Advisory Board Members to cover travel and subsistence expenses. This amount is included in travel and subsistence disclosed in note 4.

No Board Member received bonus payments, benefits in kind or pension benefits in the current or prior year.

Salary bands for all employees

Number of employees whose emoluments for the twelve months ending 31 December 2024 fell within the following bands:

	2024	2023
€10,001 - €20,000	4	2
€20,001 - €30,000	2	3
€30,001 - €40,000	4	2
€40,001 - €50,000	0	1
€50,001 - €60,000	7	6
€60,001 - €70,000	3	3
€70,001 - €80,000	2	4
€80,001 - €90,000	2	1
€90,001 - €100,000	3	3
€100,001 - €110,000	4	3
€110,001 - €120,000	1	0
€120,001 - €130,000	0	1
€130,001 - €140,000	1	1

Payments to past Directors, if relevant (Audited Information)

None.

Exit packages, if relevant (Audited Information)

None.

Food Safety Promotion Board

Accounts

For the year ended 31 December 2024



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Foreword to the accounts

1. Format

These Accounts are prepared in a form directed by the Department of Health (Northern Ireland) and the Department of Health (Ireland) with the approval of the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation and the Department of Finance (Northern Ireland), and in accordance with the financial arrangements of Part 7 of Annex 2 to the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999 and the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

2. Background information

The Food Safety Promotion Board (An Bord um Chur Chun Cinn Sábháilteachta Bia) is an Implementation Body established under the Belfast Agreement on the 2nd December 1999. The Board's governing legislation is the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999 and the North-South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

The governing legislation confers the following specific functions: -

- Promotion of food safety
- Research into food safety
- Communication of food alerts
- Surveillance of foodborne disease
- Promotion of scientific co-operation and laboratory linkages
- Development of cost effective facilities for specialised laboratory testing

In addition to the above, the Board has a general remit to act as an independent source of scientific advice.

The Food Safety Promotion Board operates under the brand name '**Safefood**'.

3. Governance

The functions of the Board are discharged by the Chief Executive who reports to the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC). The Chief Executive is assisted by an Advisory Board and a Advisory Committee. The members of the Advisory Board for 2024 were:

Advisory board 2024

Dr. Edmond Rooney	Chairperson
Mr. Damien McCallion	Vice Chairperson
Mr. Alex Attwood	
Ms. Teresa Canavan	
Ms. Irene Collins	
Dr. Elizabeth Keane	
Mr. Alan Lewis	
Mr. Kenneth McKenzie	
Ms. Elaine Clohosey	(joined April 2024)
Ms. Elaine Mooney	(joined April 2024)

Advisory committee 2024

The **Safefood** Advisory Committee comprises 12 members drawn from a broad range of expertise and disciplines available in both jurisdictions and advises on food sciences, the agri-food chain, public health nutrition, education, consumer behaviour, communications and community and voluntary matters. The term of the Committee expired in October 2023. A new Committee will be formed as soon as the NSMC (North South Ministerial Council) ratifies the appointments.

4. Financial results

The results of the Food Safety Promotion Board are set out in detail on page 75. During 2024, the Food Safety Promotion Board incurred expenditure of €9,193,759 (£7,783,619) and received income of €9,275,913 (£7,853,172) resulting in a profit for the year of €82,155 (£69,553). Comparatively, during 2023, the Food Safety Promotion Board incurred expenditure of €9,026,271 (£7,850,961) and received income of €8,796,819 (£7,651,385) resulting in a deficit for that year of €229,452 (£199,576).

5. Post balance sheet events

There were no events between the reporting date and the date of approval of these financial statements for issue that require adjustment to the financial statements. Safefood suffered a ransomware cyber-attack in August 2024. This does not result in any financial loss to Safefood during 2024. While Safefood is insured for such events there is a minor cost in 2024 related to the excess on the insurance policy. A number of financial records for July to December 2023 have not been recovered but the audit work had been completed prior to this event.

6. Charitable donations

No charitable donations were received or made during the year.

7. Policies

Employees with disabilities

The Board complies with the requirements of Part 5 of the Disabilities Act 2005 in supporting the employment of people with disabilities and continues to be committed to a policy of equal opportunity and welcomes applications from suitably qualified applicants irrespective of disability. Our disability action plan was updated in 2023 to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and to encourage their participation in public life.

Equality

Safefood's current approved Equality Scheme covers the period 2023–2028 and sets out details of how **Safefood** will fulfil our obligations and actively promote equal opportunities and good relations in our dealings with other parties and individuals.

Provision of information to and consulting with employees

An Employee Partnership Forum was in place throughout 2023 as a mechanism for consultation with employees.

Prompt payment policy and its performance

The Board is committed to the prompt payments for goods and services received, in accordance with the Irish Prompt Payments of Accounts Act, 1997 as amended by the European Communities (Late Payments in Commercial Transactions) Regulations 2013 and the UK Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, as amended by the Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of receipt of the goods or services, or on presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand whichever is later. In 2024 97% (2023 95%) of all invoices were settled within 30 days.

Health and safety policy

The Board maintains a Health and Safety policy, circulated to all employees. The policy reflects legal requirements to maintain a high standard throughout the organisation.

8. Future development

The Board's Corporate Strategy for the years 2023–2025 and Business Plan for 2025 have been developed and are currently awaiting approval.

This Corporate Strategy outlines the Board's mission, vision and core values and how the Board will implement each of its functions over the 3-year period. The strategy is re-assessed annually in the context of an annual business plan.

The budgeted expenditure for 2025 has been set at €7,971,000 (£6,855,060) which includes a once off additional budget of €264,800 (£227,728) approved by the Department of Health Ireland.

Statement of Food Safety Promotion Board's and Accountable Person's responsibilities

The Department of Health (I) and the Department of Health (NI) have directed the Food Safety Promotion Board to prepare a statement of accounts for each financial year ended 31 December in the form and on the basis set out in the accounts direction at the appendix to these Accounts. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the Body's state of affairs at the year-end and of its income and expenditure, changes in equity, and cash flows for the calendar year.

In preparing the accounts the Body is required to:

- Observe the accounts direction issued by the Department of Health (I) and the Department of Health (NI), including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- Make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts;
- Prepare the Accounts on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Body will continue in operation.

Chief Executive's responsibilities

The Chief Executive's responsibilities as the Accountable Person for the Food Safety Promotion Board, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances and for the keeping of records, are set out in the Financial Memorandum of the Body.



Dr. Gary A. Kearney
Chief Executive Officer
Date: 17.12.2025

Statement on system of internal control/governance statement

1. Scope of responsibility

As Accountable Person, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the Food Safety Promotion Board's policies, aims and objectives, while safeguarding the public funds and departmental assets for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI) and Public Finance Procedures.

The precise accountability and reporting structure is defined in the Board's Financial Memorandum, which outlines the review and monitoring role of the joint sponsor Departments (Department of Health (NI) and Department of Health (I)). In addition, as Chief Executive Officer, I am accountable to the respective public account's committees in both jurisdictions.

2. The purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims, and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Board policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically. The system of internal control has been in place in The Food Safety Promotion Board for the year ended 31 December 2024 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Accounts and accords with the Finance Departments' guidance.

3. Capacity to handle risk

The Senior Management Team is responsible for applying and overseeing the risk management process under my guidance to ensure the process is working as intended. In addition to reviewing the overall risk framework, all recommendations received from both the internal and external auditors are reviewed, with controls being enhanced or introduced as necessary.

All staff are expected to work within established policies on risk and internal control and are trained appropriately.

4. The risk and control framework

The Board has developed a risk register and risk assessment matrix. Risk is identified at both the inherent and control level at the time of the development of business plans and strategies. The Board has developed a framework of regular management information, variance review, and administrative and control procedures (including the segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability).

It also includes:

- Comprehensive Budgeting systems with the annual budget approved by the Chief Executive Officer;
- Procedures to review and agree the Budgets with the Senior Management Team;
- The preparation of regular financial reports as a basis for reviewing and monitoring progress.

In 2024, the review of the risk and control framework was aided by the comments of both the Internal and External Auditors and the Audit and Risk Committee.

5. Review of effectiveness

As accountable person, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the executive managers who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the external auditors in their management letter and other reports. A plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

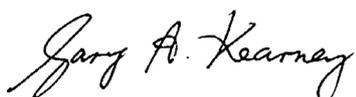
The following activities supported the effectiveness review:

- The Annual Budget, approved by the Sponsoring Departments, was reviewed monthly by the Senior Management Team, particularly any variances from planned activity.
- The framework for risk management was kept under continuing review and the risk register was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee.

A review of the effectiveness of Internal Financial Controls in place during the 2024 financial year was undertaken during the period September 2024 to December 2024 by the Internal Auditors and reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee. On the basis of their report, I am assured that overall strong systems and controls are in place to mitigate key identified risks. The audit report found that design and operation of key internal controls is satisfactory and found substantial compliance with established systems and internal financial controls. The conclusion was that reasonable assurance can be placed on the sufficiency and operation of **Safefood's** internal control framework. No high-risk findings that may result in a material financial loss or operational disruption were discovered. There was one medium and one low priority finding but overall it was found that the controls tested were operating effectively during the year ended 31 December 2024. The report noted a number of key control strengths

in the areas of Stewardship and Accountability, Policies and Procedures, Segregation of Duties, Payroll, Banking & Credit card controls, Purchasing, procurement and Invoice processing and Budgeting and Financial reporting. Recommendations were made to address the findings and implementation of these have commenced. In addition, in accordance with the internal audit plan approved by the Audit and Risk Committee a review of **Safefood's** Risk Management function was undertaken by our Internal Auditors. The objective was to provide the Audit and Risk Committee with an opinion on the effectiveness of systems, procedures and controls in place in relation to the new finance system Ipllicit. The report found one medium and one low rated risk findings and apart from 2 recommendations, it found the Risk Management processes to have operated satisfactorily during the review period. The recommendations relate to access management and third-party management.

Safefood suffered a ransomware cyber-attack in August 2024. A crisis management team was quickly assembled which included external Legal and Cyber security experts. The compromised devices were taken off-line and forensically investigated, endpoint detection monitoring software and patches were deployed on all machines and users were required to change passwords. Both the network and the three encrypted SharePoint libraries were restored from back-ups. For most of Safefood's staff, there was no disruption to business. The new cloud-based finance system (Ipllicit) was not impacted. However, for the ICT and Finance teams, there was significant additional work to fix/restore systems while at the same time supporting the rest of the organization as it continued business as usual. The final report concluded that Safefood had been the victim of a brute force attack which commenced in December 2023 before they successfully accessed Safefood's systems in August 2024. Safefood has already strengthened cyber security and will continue to implement the recommendations of the cyber security experts. Safefood maintains insurance cover for such events recovered all but €2,500 of its "external" costs.



Dr. Gary A. Kearney

Chief Executive Officer

Date: 17.12.2025

Food Safety Promotion Board

CERTIFICATE OF THE COMPTROLLERS AND AUDITORS GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY AND HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

Opinion on the accounts

We certify that we have audited the accounts of the Food Safety Promotions Board (the Body) for the year ended 31 December 2024 pursuant to the provisions of the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999 which require us to audit and certify, in co-operation, the accounts presented to us by the Body. The accounts comprise

- the statement of income and expenditure
- the statement of comprehensive income
- the statement of financial position
- the statement of cash flows
- the statement of changes in equity, and
- the related notes including significant accounting policies.

The accounts have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them.

We have also audited the information in the remuneration report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In our opinion, the accounts

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Body's affairs as at 31 December 2024 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the accounts direction in the appendix to the accounts.

Opinion on regularity

In our opinion, the expenditure and income recorded in the accounts have in all material respects been applied to the purposes intended by the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas and the financial transactions reported in the accounts conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the 'responsibilities of the auditors' section of this certificate. We are independent of the Body in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard and of the Code of Ethics issued by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions and have fulfilled our ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinions.

Information other than the accounts

The Body has presented certain other information together with the accounts. This comprises the annual report, the remuneration report, the foreword to the accounts, and the statement on the system of internal control/governance statement. Our opinion on the accounts does not

cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the accounts, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the accounts, or our knowledge obtained during the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on remuneration report

The directors have presented a remuneration report with the financial statements. Under the *North South Implementation Bodies Annual Reports and Accounts Guidance (2024)* issued jointly by the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, we are required to audit and to provide an opinion on certain disclosures made in the remuneration report.

The *North/South Implementation Bodies Annual Reports and Accounts Guidance* requires the disclosure in the remuneration report of the remuneration and estimated pension benefits of individual members of senior staff, which is included within the scope of the information to be audited. The remuneration and pension benefits of the Chief Executive Officer in the year of account has been disclosed in the remuneration report, but otherwise the required remuneration and pension disclosures in respect of senior staff members have not been made. In our opinion, except for this non-compliance, the parts of the remuneration report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with *North South Implementation Bodies Annual Reports and Accounts Guidance*.

Matters on which we report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which we report if, in our opinion

- the financial statements and the parts of the remuneration report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records
- we have not received all the information and explanations we required for our audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the accounts to be readily and properly audited, or
- the statement on the system of internal control/governance statement does not reflect compliance with applicable guidance on corporate governance.

Responsibilities of the Body and the Accounting Officer for the accounts

As explained more fully in the statement of responsibilities, the Body is responsible for the preparation of the accounts on the basis of the accounts direction included in the appendix to the accounts and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. The Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer, is responsible for the propriety and regularity in relation to the use of public funds.

Responsibilities of the auditors

Our responsibility is to audit the accounts in accordance with the provisions of the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999 and to report thereon to the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Our objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the accounts as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these accounts.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so

- We identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the accounts whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- We obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- We evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures.
- We conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Body's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our report to the related disclosures in the accounts or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Body to cease to continue as a going concern.
- We evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the accounts, including the disclosures, and whether the accounts represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

In addition, we are required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that expenditure and income recorded in the financial accounts have been applied to the purposes intended by the Northern Ireland Assembly and Houses of the Oireachtas and that the financial transactions recorded in the accounts conform to the authorities which govern them.



Seamus McCarthy
Comptroller and Auditor General, Ireland
3A Mayor Street Upper
Dublin 1
Ireland
DO1 PF72

19 December 2025



Dorinnia Carville
Comptroller and Auditor General for
Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

Statement of income and expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2024

		2024	2023	2024	2023
Income	Notes	€	€	£	£
Revenue Grant from Departments	2(a)	8,051,939	7,910,265	6,816,932	6,880,270
Capital Grant Release	9	103,974	110,554	88,026	96,158
		8,155,913	8,020,819	6,904,958	6,976,428
Other Income	2(b)	1,120,000	776,000	948,214	674,957
Total Income		9,275,913	8,796,819	7,853,172	7,651,385
Expenditure					
Staff Costs	3(b)	3,730,217	3,126,278	3,158,076	2,719,205
Board Fees		57,097	50,810	48,340	44,196
Depreciation	6	103,974	110,554	88,026	96,158
Research Programme Expenditure	5	1,325,605	1,231,134	1,122,284	1,070,828
Promotion Activities	12	2,596,551	3,001,136	2,198,292	2,610,358
Other Operating Costs	4	1,380,314	1,506,359	1,168,599	1,310,216
Total Expenditure		9,193,758	9,026,271	7,783,619	7,850,961
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		82,155	(229,452)	69,553	(199,576)
Amount transferred to General Reserve	13	82,155	(229,452)	69,553	(199,576)

All amounts above relate to continuing activities.

The notes on page 80 to 94 form part of these accounts together with Appendix 1 on page 95.

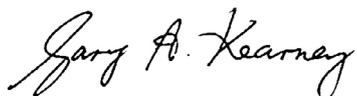


Dr. Gary A. Kearney
Chief Executive Officer
Date: 17.12.2025

Statement of comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 €'000	2023 €'000	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Surplus/(Deficit) for the period		82,155	(229,452)	69,553	(199,575)
Actuarial gain/(loss) on pension liabilities	17(b)	601,000	222,000	509,000	193,000
Adjustment to deferred pension funding		(601,000)	(222,000)	(509,000)	(193,000)
Total recognised gain/(loss) for the period		82,155	(229,452)	69,553	(199,575)

The notes on page 80 to 94 form part of these accounts together with Appendix 1 on page 95.



Dr. Gary A. Kearney
Chief Executive Officer
Date: 17.12.2025

Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 €	2023 €	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible Assets	6	176,654	256,081	146,479	222,547
Current Assets					
Receivables	7	260,222	378,181	215,771	328,659
Cash and cash equivalents	11	874,608	897,275	725,207	779,775
Current Liabilities					
Payables - amount falling due within one year	8	<u>(365,540)</u>	<u>(588,322)</u>	<u>(303,099)</u>	<u>(511,280)</u>
Net Current Assets		769,288	687,134	637,878	597,154
Total Assets less Current Liabilities before Pensions		<u>945,943</u>	<u>943,215</u>	<u>784,357</u>	<u>819,701</u>
Deferred Pension Funding	17(d)	16,241,000	15,722,000	13,467,000	13,663,000
Pension Liabilities	17(b)	<u>(16,241,000)</u>	<u>(15,722,000)</u>	<u>(13,467,000)</u>	<u>(13,663,000)</u>
Net Assets		<u>945,943</u>	<u>943,215</u>	<u>784,357</u>	<u>819,701</u>
Financed By:					
Capital and Reserves					
General Reserve	13	769,288	687,134	637,879	597,154
Capital Grant Reserve	9	176,655	256,081	146,478	222,547
		<u>945,943</u>	<u>943,215</u>	<u>784,357</u>	<u>819,701</u>

The notes on page 80 to 94 form part of these accounts together with Appendix 1 on page 95.

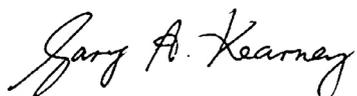


Dr. Gary A. Kearney
Chief Executive Officer
Date: 17.12.2025

Statement of cash flows for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 €	2023 €	2024 £	2023 £
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities	10	(22,668)	(274,087)	(54,570)	(259,141)
Capital expenditure and financial investment					
Payments to acquire tangible fixed assets	6	<u>(24,548)</u>	<u>(28,638)</u>	<u>(20,783)</u>	<u>(24,909)</u>
Net cash inflow/(outflow) before financing		(47,216)	(302,725)	(75,353)	(284,050)
Financing					
Capital Funding Received	9	<u>24,548</u>	<u>28,638</u>	<u>20,783</u>	<u>24,909</u>
Increase/(decrease) in cash/bank balances	11	(22,668)	(274,087)	(54,570)	(259,141)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		897,276	1,171,363	779,776	1,038,917
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		874,608	897,276	725,206	779,776

The notes on page 80 to 94 form part of these accounts together with Appendix 1 on page 95.



Dr. Gary A. Kearney
Chief Executive Officer
Date: 17.12.2025

Statement of changes in equity for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 €	2023 €	2024 £	2023 £
General Reserve					
Balance at 1 January	13	687,134	916,586	597,154	812,948
Surplus/(Deficit)	13	82,155	(229,452)	69,553	(199,576)
Actuarial Gain/(Loss)	17(b)	601,000	222,000	509,000	193,000
Deferred Pension Funding		(601,000)	(222,000)	(509,000)	(193,000)
Currency Translation Adjustment	13	0	0	(28,828)	(16,218)
Balance at 31 December		<u>769,288</u>	<u>687,134</u>	<u>637,879</u>	<u>597,154</u>
Capital and Reserves					
Balance at 1 January	9	256,081	337,997	222,547	299,780
Capital Grants	9	24,548	28,638	20,783	24,909
Amortisation	9	(103,974)	(110,554)	(88,026)	(96,158)
Currency Translation Adjustment	9		0	(8,825)	(5,984)
Balance at 31 December		<u>176,655</u>	<u>256,081</u>	<u>146,479</u>	<u>222,547</u>
Total Equity at Year End		<u>945,943</u>	<u>943,215</u>	<u>784,358</u>	<u>819,701</u>

The notes on page 80 to 94 form part of these accounts together with Appendix 1 on page 95.



Dr. Gary A. Kearney
Chief Executive Officer
Date: 17.12.2025

Notes to the accounts

1. Accounting policies

1.1 Accounting convention

The Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention.

Without limiting the information given, the Financial Statements are prepared on an accruals basis and comply with the accounting and disclosure requirements issued by the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform.

1.2 Income

Income represents revenue grants receivable from the Department of Health (I) and the Department of Health (NI).

1.3 Fixed assets

a) Tangible Fixed assets are included at historic cost to the Food Safety Promotion Board.

b) Depreciation is calculated to write off the cost over their useful lives. The methods adopted and the rates used per annum are as follows:

Office Equipment	15% Straight Line
Computer Equipment	33.3% Straight Line
Property and Fitout Costs	4% Straight Line
Fixtures and Fittings	10% Straight Line

c) Depreciation is charged in the year of acquisition but not in the year of disposal.

d) Fixed Assets are capitalised once they exceed €650 (£554).

1.4 Value Added Tax

The Food Safety Promotion Board is not in a position to reclaim VAT and VAT is included as expenditure or in the capital value of Fixed Assets.

1.5 Retirement benefits

The Food Safety Promotion Board has adopted FRS 102 in relation to accounting for retirement benefits.

The North/South Pension Scheme was established by the North/South Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland Limited with effect from 29 April 2005. It is a defined benefit pension scheme which is funded annually on a pay as you go basis from monies provided by the UK and Irish Exchequers. The scheme is administered by an external administrator.

Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 covers retirement benefits. The liability at 31 December 2024 has been included in the financial statements and a disclosure note has been included (Note 17) detailing the actuarial review calculations, which were carried out by XPS using the projected unit method. This includes the results of the calculations of the pension liabilities and costs of employees (and ex-employees) of the Food Safety Promotion Board for the purposes of the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024 and comparative figures for 2023.

Retirement Benefit costs reflect retirement benefits earned by employees in the period. An amount corresponding to the retirement benefit charge is recognised as income to the extent that it is recoverable and offset by grants received in the year to discharge retirement benefit payments. Retirement Benefit liabilities represent the present value of future retirement benefit payments earned by staff to date. Deferred retirement benefit funding represents a corresponding asset, being resources to be made available in future periods from the UK and Irish Exchequers in the manner described above.

Actuarial gains and losses arising from changes in actuarial assumptions and from experience surpluses and deficits are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income. From 2012, the current retirement benefit service cost is recognised gross of members' contributions. Treatment in prior years had been to recognise the members' contributions separately within the retirement benefits note.

1.6 Research programme expenditure

Research Contract costs included in the Income and Expenditure Account are based on expenditure due and payable in the year on foot of approved research contracts.

1.7 Capital grant reserve

The Capital Grant Reserve Account represents the unamortised value of income used for capital purposes.

1.8 Reporting currency

The transactions and balances of the Board are reported in both Euro and Sterling. The working currency of the Board is Euro and transactions are recorded in that currency. Transactions in other currencies are recorded in euro at the exchange rate ruling at the date of the transactions and sourced from ECB Reference Rates. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in Sterling are translated into Euro at the rates of exchange prevailing at the Balance Sheet date (0.82918). Realised gains and losses are taken to the Income and Expenditure Account.

At year-end the financial statements are translated into Sterling. The Income and Expenditure Account is translated using the average exchange rate for the year (2024 - 0.84662, 2023 - 0.86979) while the Balance Sheet is translated using the closing exchange rate (2024 - 0.82918, 2023 - 0.86905). Currency adjustments arising from this translation of the financial statements are reflected in Net Cash Flow from Operating Activities (Note 10), Capital Grant Reserve (Note 9), and General Reserve (Note 13).

1.9 Statement of compliance

The financial statements of Safefood for the year ended 31 December 2024 have been prepared in accordance with FRS102, the financial reporting standards applicable in the UK and Ireland issued by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), as promulgated by Chartered Accountants Ireland and, except where indicated, are in compliance with the requirements of the North/South Implementation Bodies Annual Reports and Accounts Guidance issued by the Department of Finance (NI) and Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.

2. a) Grants from the departments

Financial Period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

	Note	DOH(I) €	DOH(NI) €	Total €	DOH (I) £	DOH(NI) £	Total £
Revenue Grant		5,663,628	2,388,311	8,051,939	4,794,941	2,021,992	6,816,933
Capital Account	9	17,270	7,279	24,549	14,621	6,162	20,783
		<u>5,680,898</u>	<u>2,395,590</u>	<u>8,076,488</u>	<u>4,809,562</u>	<u>2,028,154</u>	<u>6,837,716</u>

Financial Period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023

	Note	DOH(I) €	DOH(NI) €	Total €	DOH (I) £	DOH(NI) £	Total £
Revenue Grant		5,643,056	2,267,209	7,910,265	4,908,273	1,971,996	6,880,270
Capital Account	9	20,430	8,208	28,638	17,770	7,139	24,909
		<u>5,663,486</u>	<u>2,275,417</u>	<u>7,938,903</u>	<u>4,926,043</u>	<u>1,979,135</u>	<u>6,905,179</u>

The Food Safety Promotion Board receives grants from the Department of Health (DOH (I)) and the Department of Health (DOH (NI)). The respective contributions are DOH (I) 70% (2023 71%), and DOH (NI) 30% (2023 29%).

The grants awarded are recorded at a business plan exchange rate for budgeting purposes and at the actual application date exchange rate for the financial statements. In 2024 the budget was €7,754,000 (2023 €7,746,000) excluding pensions and €7,969,400 (2023 €7,906,461) including pensions based on an exchange rate of €1 to £0.87 (2023 €1 to £0.86). The average exchange rate over the period was €1 to £0.84662 (2023 €1 to £0.86979), as a result the grant recognised including pensions was €8,051,939 (2023 - €7,938,903) - a foreign exchange gain on grant conversion of €82,539 (2023 gain of €32,442).

2. b) Other income

		2024	2023	2024	2023
	Note	€	€	£	£
Net deferred funding for pensions	17 (c)	1,120,000	776,000	948,214	674,957
		<u>1,120,000</u>	<u>776,000</u>	<u>948,214</u>	<u>674,957</u>

3. Staff costs

a) The average number of staff (including agency staff) was:

	2024	2023
Directorates		
Senior Management	5	5
Corporate Operations	8	9
Food Safety	6	6
Nutrition	4	4
Communications	7	7
Total	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>

b) The costs incurred in respect of these staff were:

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Salary Costs	2,095,912	1,944,018	1,774,440	1,690,888
Employer PRSI	215,378	198,755	182,344	172,875
Agency Staff	0	0	0	0
Pension Costs:				
Current Pension Service Costs	1,418,927	983,505	1,201,292	855,442
	<u>3,730,217</u>	<u>3,126,278</u>	<u>3,158,076</u>	<u>2,719,205</u>

During the year, €50,899/ £43,092 (2023 €45,428/£39,512) of additional superannuation contributions, under Part 4 of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017, were deducted and paid over to the Department of Health.

c) The following information is provided in respect of the Senior Management Team:

	Emoluments	Emoluments	Real Increase/ (Decrease) in Pension Earned	Real Increase/ (Decrease) in Pension Earned	Value of Accrued Pension at year-end	Value of Accrued Pension at year-end	Age (years)
	€	£	€	£	€	£	
Dr Gary Kearney (Formal appointment to CEO in April 2024)	130,000- 135,000	108,724- 114,154	4,000- 4,500	3,386- 3,810	56,000- 57,000	47,411- 48,257	59

The North/South Implementation Bodies Annual Reports and Accounts Guidance, provides for disclosure of the remuneration and pension entitlements of certain senior staff members. In view of Data Protection legislation, the Board has not made these disclosures as this could result in a data protection breach. Ms Fiona Gilligan (Director, Communications), Dr Aileen McGloin (Director, Nutrition), Ms Patricia Fitzgerald (Director, Corporate Operations) and Ms Patricia Twohig (Director Food Science) withheld consent to disclose the above information.

All emoluments are in line with standard public sector emoluments for their grades. The total remuneration paid to the key management team in 2024 amounted to €567,681.52/£480,611 (2023 €513,716/£446,825).

4. Other operating costs

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Rent and Electricity*	592,979	604,941	502,028	526,172
Printing, Reports and Literature	17,629	23,256	14,925	20,227
Travel and Subsistence**	142,229	108,231	120,414	94,138
Computer Support	209,352	231,859	177,240	201,668
Telephone	40,884	54,788	34,613	47,654
Postage and Stationery	1,588	4,373	1,344	3,803
Meeting Costs ***	10,955	9,630	9,275	8,376
Office Expenses ***	55,944	40,342	47,363	35,089
Currency Variance	-14,218	7,197	-12,037	6,260
Recruitment Expenses	14,482	21,117	12,261	18,367
Training	37,375	32,082	31,642	27,904
Insurance	24,144	23,840	20,441	20,736
Subscriptions	11,063	15,075	9,366	13,112
Auditors' Remuneration	24,500	26,700	20,742	23,223
Legal and Professional Fees	89,702	167,251	75,943	145,473
Cleaning and Catering	14,308	19,674	12,113	17,113
Maintenance and Repairs	105,498	113,725	89,317	98,917
Bank Charges	1,900	2,278	1,609	1,982
	<u>1,380,314</u>	<u>1,506,359</u>	<u>1,168,599</u>	<u>1,310,214</u>

*The Board entered into an agreement in 2016 to lease a portion of the ground floor of the Cork Office to the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland (OPW) for a period of 10 years. The annual rent for this lease is €76,667 per annum, payable in quarterly instalments.

**The costs incurred for Foreign Travel in 2024 amounted to €12,025/£10,181 (2023 €4,824/£4,196).

***The hospitality element of costs in 2024 was €3,922/£3,320 (2023 €6,603/£5,743).

5. Research programme expenditure

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Food Safety	450,676	581,518	381,551	505,799
Nutrition	559,463	369,779	473,653	321,630
Research Placement Projects	70,064	57,622	59,318	50,119
Community Food Initiatives	245,402	222,215	207,762	193,280
	<u>1,325,605</u>	<u>1,231,134</u>	<u>1,122,284</u>	<u>1,070,828</u>

6. Fixed Assets

	Office Equipment	Property and Fitout Cost	Fixtures and Fittings	Computer Equipment and Software	Total
	€	€	€	€	€
Cost or Valuation					
At 1 January 2024	225,227	1,768,949	381,760	431,565	2,807,501
Additions	0	0	0	24,548	24,548
Disposals	0	0	0	(21,498)	(21,498)
At 31 December 2024	<u>225,227</u>	<u>1,768,949</u>	<u>381,760</u>	<u>434,615</u>	<u>2,810,551</u>
Depreciation					
At 1 January 2024	223,471	1,591,995	324,325	411,631	2,551,422
Provision for the year	0	70,811	14,004	19,157	103,973
Disposals	0	0	0	(21,498)	(21,498)
At 31 December 2024	<u>223,471</u>	<u>1,662,807</u>	<u>338,329</u>	<u>409,290</u>	<u>2,633,897</u>
NBV at 31 December 2024	<u>1,756</u>	<u>106,142</u>	<u>43,431</u>	<u>25,325</u>	<u>176,654</u>
NBV at 31 December 2023	<u>1,756</u>	<u>176,954</u>	<u>57,435</u>	<u>19,934</u>	<u>256,079</u>

	Office Equipment	Property and Fitout Cost	Fixtures and Fittings	Computer Equipment and Software	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Cost or Valuation					
At 1 January 2024	195,734	1,537,305	331,769	375,052	2,439,859
Exchange Adjustment	(8,980)	(70,528)	(15,221)	(17,206)	(111,935)
Additions	0	0	0	20,355	20,355
Disposals	0	0	0	(17,836)	(17,836)
At 31 December 2024	<u>186,754</u>	<u>1,466,777</u>	<u>316,548</u>	<u>360,365</u>	<u>2,330,443</u>
Depreciation					
At 1 January 2024	194,207	1,383,524	281,854	357,728	2,217,313
Exchange Adjustment	(8,909)	(64,709)	(13,174)	(16,371)	(103,163)
Provision for the year	0	59,951	11,856	16,219	88,026
Disposals	0	0	0	(18,201)	(18,201)
At 31 December 2024	<u>185,298</u>	<u>1,378,766</u>	<u>280,536</u>	<u>339,375</u>	<u>2,183,975</u>
NBV at 31 December 2024	<u>1,456</u>	<u>88,011</u>	<u>36,012</u>	<u>20,990</u>	<u>146,469</u>
NBV at 31 December 2023	<u>1,526</u>	<u>153,782</u>	<u>49,915</u>	<u>17,324</u>	<u>222,547</u>

7. Receivables

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Receivables	2,285	14,298	1,895	12,426
Prepayments and Accrued Income	257,937	363,883	213,876	316,233
	<u>260,222</u>	<u>378,181</u>	<u>215,771</u>	<u>328,659</u>

8. Payables (amounts falling due within one year)

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Payables and Accruals	<u>365,540</u>	<u>588,322</u>	<u>303,099</u>	<u>511,280</u>

9. Capital grant reserve

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Opening Balance	256,081	337,997	222,547	299,780
Capital Additions	24,548	28,638	20,783	24,909
Capital Disposals – Cost	(21,498)	(24,313)	(18,201)	(21,147)
Capital Disposals – Depreciation	21,498	24,313	18,201	22,147
Currency Translation Adjustment	0	0	(8,825)	(5,984)
Less amount released to I and E A/C *	(103,974)	(110,554)	(88,026)	(96,158)
	<u>176,655</u>	<u>256,081</u>	<u>146,479</u>	<u>222,547</u>

* Amount released to I and E	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Amortised in line with depreciation	(103,974)	(110,554)	(88,026)	(96,158)
	<u>(103,974)</u>	<u>(110,554)</u>	<u>(88,026)</u>	<u>(96,158)</u>

10. Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Surplus/(Deficit) for the period	82,155	(229,452)	69,553	(199,575)
Transfer from Capital Grant Reserve	(103,974)	(110,554)	(88,026)	(96,158)
Depreciation Charges	103,974	110,554	88,026	96,158
(Increase)/Decrease in Debtors	117,959	(183,050)	112,888	(155,591)
Increase/(Decrease) in Creditors	222,782	138,415	(208,182)	112,245
Currency Translation Adjustment		0	(28,828)	(16,219)
	<u>(22,668)</u>	<u>(274,087)</u>	<u>(54,569)</u>	<u>(259,140)</u>

The currency translation adjustment reflects the amount of the movement in the value of current assets and liabilities which is attributable to the change in exchange rates over the year.

11. Analysis of the balances of cash as shown in the Balance Sheet

	At 01.01.24	Cashflow	At 31.12.24
	€	€	€
Euro Account	260,562	304,461	565,023
Sterling Account	628,729	-317,664	311,065
Deposit Account	52	0	52
Petty Cash	539	-449	90
Credit Cards	7,392	-9,016	-1,624
Total	<u>897,274</u>	<u>-22,668</u>	<u>874,608</u>

	At 01.01.24	Cashflow	At 31.12.24
	£	£	£
Euro Account	226,441	242,065	468,506
Sterling Account	546,397	-288,468	257,929
Deposit Account	45	-2	43
Petty Cash	468	-393	75
Credit Cards	6,424	-7,770	-1,346
Total	<u>779,775</u>	<u>-54,568</u>	<u>725,207</u>

12. Promotion activities

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Media Costs	1,942,720	2,487,771	1,644,745	2,163,838
Marketing Costs	398,323	257,232	337,228	223,738
Events	50,437	77,580	42,701	67,479
Publications	65,926	8,136	55,814	7,076
Project and Conference Sponsorship	53,447	38,474	45,250	33,464
Educational Development	69,626	122,107	58,947	106,208
Helpline Activities	16,072	9,836	13,607	8,555
	<u>2,596,551</u>	<u>3,001,136</u>	<u>2,198,292</u>	<u>2,610,358</u>

13. General reserve

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€	€	£	£
Opening Balance	687,134	916,586	597,154	812,948
Surplus/(Deficit)	82,155	(229,452)	69,553	(199,576)
Currency Translation Adjustment	0	0	(28,828)	(16,218)
Closing Balance	<u>769,289</u>	<u>687,134</u>	<u>637,879</u>	<u>597,154</u>

14. Related party transactions

The Food Safety Promotion Board is a cross border implementation body sponsored by the Department of Health (I) and the Department of Health (NI) which are regarded as related parties. During the year, The Food Safety Promotion Board was principally funded by these departments and had various transactions with them. No Board member, key manager or other related party has undertaken any material transactions with the Food Safety Promotion Board during the year.

15. Future capital expenditure

The Food Safety Promotion Board had no capital commitments at 31 December 2024.

16. Leases/commitments

(a) Future minimum lease commitments

At 31 December 2024, the Board had commitments under operating leases as follows:

	31.12.24	31.12.23	31.12.24	31.12.23
	€	€	£	£
Within 1 Year	483,333	483,333	400,770	420,042
Between 2 and 5 Years	720,253	1,203,586	597,219	1,045,976
More than 5 Years	556,769	556,769	461,662	483,860
	<u>1,760,355</u>	<u>2,243,688</u>	<u>1,459,651</u>	<u>1,949,878</u>

The Board entered into an agreement in 2016 to lease a portion of the ground floor of the Cork Office to the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland (OPW) for a period of 10 years. The annual rent for this lease is €76,667 per annum, payable in quarterly instalments.

The overall annual rent payable in respect of leased premises is broken down as follows:

Rents payable/(receivable)

Location	Expiry Date	31.12.24	31.12.23	31.12.24	31.12.23
		€	€	£	£
Cork	2026	370,000	370,000	306,797	321,549
Cork Sub Lease	2026	(76,667)	(76,667)	(63,571)	(66,627)
Dublin	2031	190,000	190,000	157,544	165,120
Total Annual Costs (Net)		<u>483,333</u>	<u>483,333</u>	<u>400,770</u>	<u>420,042</u>

The Food Safety Promotion Board has signed a lease in 2023 for 10 years from December 2022 to December 2031.

(b) Other Commitments

The Board has other commitments in respect of approved research contracts at 31 December 2024 in the amount of €265,984 / £231,406 (2023 €511,935 / £444,897).

17. Retirement benefits

The retirement benefit scheme consists of a number of sections with different benefit structures. The main sections are:

The Core Final Salary section – this is a final salary pension arrangement with benefits modelled on the Classic section of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland. The scheme provides a retirement benefit (eightieths per year of service), a gratuity or lump sum (three–eightieths per year of service) and spouse's and children's pensions. Normal retirement age is a member's 60th birthday. Retirement Benefits in payment (and deferment) increase in line with general price inflation.

The Core Alpha section – this is a career averaged revalued earnings retirement benefit arrangement or 'CARE' scheme with benefits modelled on the alpha section of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland. The scheme provides a retirement benefit based on a percentage (2.55%) of pensionable pay for each year of active membership (the retirement benefit is increased at the start of each scheme year in line with general price inflation) and spouses's and children's pensions. Normal Retirement Age is a member's State Pension Age in the relevant jurisdiction which is currently 67, 68 or between 67 and 68 in the UK and 66 in Ireland. Retirement Benefits in payment (and deferment) increase in line with general price inflation.

Benefits accumulated for service up to 31 March 2015 remain payable at retirement on a final salary basis. Therefore, most core section members have benefits in both the Final Salary and Alpha section and new entrants who join the scheme after 1 April 2015 will in most cases, become members of the Core Alpha section.

Reserved Rights Section – all Southern Core Members were given the option to change to a category of membership based on the Superannuation Scheme for Established Civil Servants (which is the Irish Civil Servants Scheme). The options exercise was completed on 31 March 2015 and 14 of the employees opted to change category of membership.

The retirement benefit valuation at 31 December 2024 is based on FRS102 convention and has been carried out by a qualified independent actuary. Allowance has been made for expected mortality over the period, as well as actual movement in financial conditions since the valuation date. The results this year have been prepared by carrying out a full valuation of the scheme's liabilities incorporating market conditions and scheme data at 31 December 2024. The principal assumptions used to calculate scheme liabilities are:

a) Principal actuarial assumptions used for the calculations

	2024	2023
Discount rate (Ireland)	3.57%	3.40%
Discount rate (Northern Ireland)	5.51%	4.54%
Inflation rate (Ireland)	1.95%	2.10%
Inflation rate (Northern Ireland)	2.70%	2.55%
Rate of increase in salary (Ireland)	2.70%	2.55%
Rate of increase in salary (Northern Ireland)	2.70%	2.55%
Rate of increase in pensions (Ireland):		
Core members	1.95%	2.10%
All other members	2.70%	2.55%
Rate of increase in pensions (Northern Ireland)	2.70%	2.55%
Year-end exchange rate (Sterling : Euros)	1.21	1.15
Mid-year exchange rate (Sterling : Euros)	1.18	1.15
Average expected future life at age 65 for:		
Male currently aged 65	86.7yrs	86.80yrs
Female currently aged 65	89.1yrs	89yrs
Male currently aged 45	87.9yrs	88.10yrs
Female currently aged 45	90.5yrs	90.40yrs

b) Movement in Net Pension Liability during the financial year

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€'000	€'000	£'000	£'000
(Deficit) in the retirement benefit liability at 1 January	(15,722)	(15,168)	(13,663)	(13,453)
Retirement Benefits paid during the year	299	208	253	181
Current service cost	(875)	(402)	(741)	(350)
Past service credit	0	0	0	0
Net transfers out of/(in to) the scheme	0	0	0	0
Other finance income/(charge)	(544)	(582)	(461)	(506)
Actuarial gain/(loss)	601	222	509	193
Exchange differences – £ comparisons	0	0	636	272
(Deficit) in the pension liability at 31 December	<u>(16,241)</u>	<u>(15,722)</u>	<u>(13,467)</u>	<u>(13,663)</u>

Analysis of the movement in (deficit) in the Plan during the period is as follows

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€'000	€'000	£'000	£'000
Gain/(loss) on change of financial assumptions	661	(828)	560	(720)
Gain/(loss) due to changes in demographic assumptions	0	0	0	0
Experience gain/(loss)	(60)	1050	(51)	913
Gain/(loss) due to currency movements	0	0	0	0
Exchange differences – £ comparisons	0	0	(0)	(0)
Actuarial gain/(loss)	<u>601</u>	<u>222</u>	<u>509</u>	<u>193</u>

c) Income and expenditure account analysis for the financial year

Analysis of the net deferred funding for retirement benefit is as follows:

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€'000	€'000	£'000	£'000
Current service cost	875	402	741	350
Other finance cost	544	582	461	506
Retirement Benefits paid during the year	(299)	(208)	(253)	(181)
Net transfers (out of)/in to the scheme	0	0	0	0
Exchange differences – £ comparisons	0	0	0	0
	<u>1,120</u>	<u>776</u>	<u>949</u>	<u>675</u>

Analysis of the current retirement benefit service costs is as follows:

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€'000	€'000	£'000	£'000
Current service cost	875	402	741	350
Other finance cost	544	582	461	505
	<u>1,419</u>	<u>984</u>	<u>1,202</u>	<u>855</u>

d) Deferred retirement benefit funding

In accordance with accounting practice for non-commercial State sponsored bodies in Ireland, the Food Safety Promotion Board recognises an asset representing resources to be made available by the UK and Irish Exchequers for the unfunded deferred liability for retirement benefits on the basis of a number of past events. These events include the statutory backing for the superannuation schemes, and the policy and practice in relation to funding public service retirement benefits in both jurisdictions including the annual estimates process.

While there is no formal agreement and therefore no guarantee regarding these specific amounts with the funding bodies, the Food Safety Promotion Board has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet this amount in accordance with current practice. This treatment is inconsistent with accounting practice for UK Non-Departmental Bodies, where, due to absence of a formal guarantee, a funding liability is not recognised until the commitment falls due.

The deferred funding asset for retirement benefits as at 31 December 2024 amounted to €16,241m/ £13,467m (2023:€15,722m/£13,663m).

	2024	2023	2024	2023
	€'000	€'000	£'000	£'000
Opening Balance at 1 January	15,722	15,168	13,663	13,453
Increase/(decrease) in Deferred Pension Funding	519	554	(196)	210
Balance at 31 December	<u>16,241</u>	<u>15,722</u>	<u>13,467</u>	<u>13,663</u>

e) History of defined benefit liabilities

	2024	2023	2022	2021
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
(Deficit) as at 31 December	(16,241)	(15,722)	(15,168)	(21,368)
Experience adjustment on liabilities Including exchange rate effect gain/(loss)	(60)	1,050	(784)	(48)
Percentage of Scheme Liabilities	0.4%	6.7%	5.2%	0.2%

	2024	2023	2022	2021
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
(Deficit) as at 31 December	(13,467)	(13,663)	(13,453)	(17,955)
Experience adjustment on liabilities Including exchange rate effect gain/(loss)	(51)	913	(669)	41
Percentage of Scheme Liabilities	0.4%	6.7%	5.2%	0.2%

f) Sensitivity analysis

	€'000
Change in the value of the liabilities	
Discount rate + 0.5%	(1,437)
Inflation + 0.5%	1,571
Mortality (1 year younger)	506

18. Contingent liabilities

McCloud and Sargeant Ruling – Contingent Liability Note

The Court of Appeal in the McCloud and Sargeant cases found the transitional protections introduced as part of the 2015 reforms to public service pensions were discriminatory. In response to those judgments, a “prospective” and “retrospective” remedy have been confirmed. The “prospective” element means that from 1 April 2022 members of the North/South Pension Scheme Core Final Salary and Reserved Rights PCSPS(NI) sections were moved to the alpha scheme in respect of any accrual from that date. The impact of this change on the liabilities has been allowed for in the above disclosures.

The Bodies are currently working with administrators to deal with the “Retrospective” remedy. This remedy will result in affected members being given a “deferred choice underpin” for the period 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022. In effect members can select the method of benefit accrual (final salary or CARE in the alpha section) over the remedy period which is most advantageous to them. Until every member impacted retires the final cost of this remedy is unknown. A contingent liability, which is an estimate of the possible additional liability associated with this matter, has been calculated. As time progresses, and members retire and make their choice, we expect that the contingent liability as a proportion of total liability to reduce.

No allowance has been made for the Retrospective element of the remedy in the above disclosures. We estimate, on the basis of previous contingent liability notes prepared for each Body, that additional costs for the retrospective remedy will be up to €109k for this Body as at 31 December 2024 (€163k – FY23). This includes allowance for arrears due to current pensioner members

19. Date of authorisation for issue

The Accountable Person (CEO) authorised the issue of these financial statements on the 17/12/2025.

Appendix 1 – accounts direction

Food Safety Promotion Board

Accounts direction given by the Northern Department of Health and the Southern Department of Health, with the approval of the finance departments north and south, in accordance with the north/south co-operation (implementation bodies) (Northern Ireland) order 1999 and the southern British-Irish Agreement act 1999.

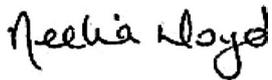
The annual accounts shall give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year, and the state of affairs as at the year end. Subject to this requirement, the Body shall prepare accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2018 and subsequent financial years in accordance with:

- a) the North/South Implementation Bodies Annual Reports and Accounts Guidance;
- b) other guidance which Finance Departments may issue from time to time in respect of accounts which are required to give a true and fair view; and
- c) any other specific disclosures required by the Sponsor Departments,

except where agreed otherwise with Finance Departments, in which case the exception shall be described in the notes to the accounts.

Signed by the authority of the

Department of Health (NI)



Dated
1 October 2019

Department of Health (S)



Dated
30 October 2019

