

# Evaluation of Food Safety Risk Intelligence



## About the Evaluation

**Mitigating food safety risks is the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) highest priority. To do so, the agency has systems and practices in place to identify food safety trends and risks.**

The evaluation looked at whether CFIA's food safety risk intelligence (FSRI) systems and practices are working as intended to transform information into useful products that are shared across the agency to better support decision-making and integrated risk management activities. This is important because FSRI allows the agency to take a proactive approach and allocate resources to the highest-risk areas to safeguard the Canadian food supply, and protect the health and well-being of Canada's people and economy.

## Evaluation Approach

The mixed method research design for this evaluation incorporated several lines of evidence using multiple data collection and analysis methods, including interviews, document and literature reviews, and analysis of financial reports.

## Key observations and recommendations

**The evaluation found that CFIA's FSRI systems and practices were generally working well to safeguard the Canadian food supply. However, the CFIA did not have a clearly documented, accountable lead for FSRI activities. There was a lack of clarity about the strategic vision and priorities for FSRI activities, and confusion about roles and responsibilities. This led to a fragmented approach to collecting, managing and reporting on FSRI. There was also a lack of an effective performance measurement framework and the absence of a clear process to document and share risk intelligence gathered from external stakeholders to ensure relevant officials considered this information in decision-making.**

<p><b>OBSERVATION 1</b> The CFIA made significant progress and enhancements to the agency's FSRI capacity and was increasingly proactive between 2016-2020.</p>	
<p><b>OBSERVATION 2</b> The CFIA used FSRI to inform control measures, allocate inspection resources, target preventative activities and, more recently, to prioritize critical services during COVID-19.</p>	
<p><b>OBSERVATION 3</b> The CFIA created the Risk Intelligence Working Group as a single, multi-branch forum to coordinate FSRI activities, but the Group was relatively inactive and unstructured with no formal governance path.</p>	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1</b> The CFIA should create and approve a Terms of Reference for the Risk Intelligence Working Group that clearly describes the working group's mandate, structure, roles and responsibilities, and meeting schedule. This Terms of Reference should describe the governance path for the working group to report on the results of its activities and to provide recommendations to decision-makers.</p>
<p><b>OBSERVATION 4</b> The CFIA did not have a clearly documented, accountable lead for FSRI activities. As a result, there was a lack of clarity about the strategic vision and priorities for FSRI activities, and confusion about roles and responsibilities, particularly at the working level. This led to a fragmented approach to collecting, managing and reporting on FSRI.</p>	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 2</b> The CFIA should clarify, document and communicate the accountability, roles and responsibilities for collecting, managing and reporting on the results of the agency's FSRI activities.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATION 3</b> The agency should clarify, document and communicate a consistent, integrated approach for internal processes for gathering, storing, analyzing and taking action on FSRI.</p>
<p><b>OBSERVATION 5</b> The CFIA lacked an effective performance measurement framework for FSRI activities that includes regular, documented reporting.</p>	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 4</b> The CFIA should update its performance measurement framework to include measures that will allow the agency to monitor and report on progress toward FSRI program outcomes, and continuously improve performance. The FSRI performance measures should feed into the agency's broader Food Program performance measurement framework.</p>
<p><b>OBSERVATION 6</b> The CFIA actively engaged with external stakeholders to gather food safety risk information. However, the agency did not have a clear process to document and share the risk intelligence gathered from external stakeholders to ensure all relevant officials received and considered the information in decision-making.</p>	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 5</b> The CFIA should clarify, document and communicate the processes to gather food safety risk information from external stakeholders, and share the information gathered with the Risk Intelligence Working Group in a timely manner.</p>

