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Report from the EFTA Surveillance Authority
on the overall operation of official controls of the
Food and Veterinary Area in
Iceland and Norway
2023



[ESA Food and Veterinary Unit](#)

Executive Summary

This report describes the overall outcome of the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA)'s control activities in 2023 in the areas of food and feed safety, animal health and animal welfare, plant protection products and organic production ('food and veterinary area'). It also summarizes the official controls carried out by the national competent authorities in Iceland and Norway.

The national competent authorities in Iceland and Norway are responsible for carrying out official controls to verify that operators along the food and feed chain comply with EEA law, and for taking appropriate enforcement measures in cases of non-compliances. Both States submitted the required annual reports on the implementation of their official controls to ESA for 2023.

The annual reports submitted by the states, show that official controls in Iceland and Norway were carried out in accordance with their respective multi-annual national control plans. ESA notes a marked improvement in the information provided in the annual reports. However, data is missing for some sections, with inconsistencies also identified in the information provided from different sectors. This impacts the possibilities for data comparisons and decreases the value of the conclusions that can be drawn on the overall outcome of the controls.

ESA carries out its own controls, including audits and desk-based analyses, to verify the application of the EEA legislation in Iceland and Norway in the food and veterinary area and the effectiveness of their national control systems. ESA issues recommendations to the States when identifying systemic shortcomings in official controls and control systems.

In 2023, ESA's controls confirmed that Iceland and Norway have established systems to monitor and enforce EEA law and that they have, with few exceptions, incorporated and applied the relevant EEA rules. ESA systematically follows-up all open recommendations and engages in continuous communication with the Iceland and Norway to monitor progress on the implementation of corrective actions to address the recommendations.

In 2023, a review of recommendations issued by ESA since 2010 revealed certain recurring issues. This indicates some systematic weaknesses in the control systems that have not been sufficiently addressed. In response to these findings, ESA held workshops in both Iceland and Norway to provide guidance on effectively addressing recommendations through corrective actions.

If Iceland or Norway fail to provide adequate assurances that satisfactory actions have been implemented in a timely manner, ESA may decide to initiate infringement procedures. In 2023, ESA closed an infringement case against Norway concerning import controls after Norway made the necessary legislative and administrative changes to comply with EEA rules.

Based on the information reported by Iceland and Norway and ESA's own controls, ESA concludes that, overall, the two States have established and functioning control systems that are generally effective in ensuring compliance with EEA rules in the food and veterinary area.

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INTRODUCTION

The responsibility to implement and enforce EEA legislation in the food and veterinary area¹ lies with Iceland and Norway. National competent authorities must monitor and verify, through the organisation of official controls and, where necessary, by appropriate enforcement actions, that operators comply with relevant EEA requirements.

Since 2020, Iceland and Norway have annually reported the results of their official controls using an electronic format harmonised for the entire EEA.

The EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) carries out controls to verify the implementation and application of EEA legislation in Iceland and Norway. These controls are carried out in the areas of food and feed safety, animal health and animal welfare, plant protection products, organic production and the functioning of national control systems and the responsible competent authorities.

ESA also monitors the transposition of EEA rules into national law in Norway and Iceland. 283 EU acts were incorporated into the EEA Agreement in the food and veterinary field in 2023. ESA publishes bi-annually a [Scoreboard](#) that measures the EEA EFTA States performance in transposing EEA rules on time.

Audits are carried out to verify the incorporation and application of EEA rules in the food and veterinary area and to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of official controls performed by the national competent authorities. ESA publishes the final reports from audits, including any plan for corrective actions provided by the national competent authorities to address ESA's recommendations for identified shortcomings www.eftasurv.int.

Desk-based analyses are controls based on documentary reviews only. Certain desk-based analyses are specifically required by EEA legislation, and ESA will assess relevant documents to verify compliance of Iceland and Norway with the EEA requirements. ESA also uses desk-based analyses to assess the current situation in certain areas or sectors.

Fact-finding studies do not focus on compliance with existing EEA legislation. The aim is to gather information on national arrangements in a specific area or sector, e.g. identifying best practices in areas not covered by EEA legislation. Depending on the objectives, information gathered during fact finding studies might be published in an overview report.

ESA systematically follows up on recommendations issued following audits, and can, when necessary, initiate infringement proceedings for incorrect application or implementation of EEA rules.

The abbreviations used in this report are listed in Annex 1.

For an overview of legislation referred to in this report please see Annex 2.

¹ EEA legislation in the food and veterinary area includes food and food safety, feed and feed safety, animal health and welfare requirements, animal by-products and derived products, requirements for the placing on the market and use of plant protection products and the sustainable use of pesticides, organic production and the labelling of organic products.

Part I: ESA's CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN ICELAND AND NORWAY IN 2023

The EFTA Surveillance Authority's Delegated Decision No 271/21/COL² sets out the priorities for ESA's control programme for the period 2022 to 2026 (control programme). The criteria for prioritisation include *inter alia* identified risks through e.g., the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) or the Animal Disease Information System (ADIS), emerging risks such as food or feed crisis or animal disease outbreaks, the relevance of a sector, the outcome of ESA's previous controls, as well as Iceland and Norway's performance addressing shortcomings identified and the relevant priorities set by the European Commission in its control programme³.

ESA established its work programme for 2023 in the food and veterinary area in line with the priorities set out in the control programme. ESA's work programme was discussed with the two states at a meeting on 27 September 2022 before being finalised and sent to Iceland and Norway on 17 November 2022. The work programme for 2023 was published on ESA's website shortly thereafter⁴.

The following sections provide a summary of ESA's control activities in 2023 in the prioritised areas, as well as of the overall functioning of the control systems in Iceland and Norway.

ESA's control activities in 2023 for Iceland and Norway are listed in Figure 1.

	Iceland	Norway
Audit		1
Desk-based analysis	3	3
Fact-finding study		1
General review audit	1	1
Border Control Post verification		1
Workshops	1	1

Figure 1: ESA's control activities in 2023 by type and State

1 AUDITS AND CONTROLS

1.1 Audit on official controls related to Avian Influenza and Newcastle disease

In recent years, several epizootic waves of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) have had a major impact on the domestic poultry sector across Europe where they have caused significant direct and indirect economic and societal costs.

² [EFTA Surveillance Authority Delegated Decision No 271/21/COL](#) of 3 December 2021 establishing a multiannual programme of controls for the period 2022-2026 to be carried out in Iceland and Norway to verify application of EEA legislation in the food and veterinary area (OJ L 43, 24.2.2022, p. 87-92).

³ [Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2020/1550](#) of 23 October 2020 establishing the multiannual programme of controls for the period 2021-2025 to be carried out by Commission experts in the Member States to verify the application of Union agri-food chain legislation (OJ L 354, 26.10.2020, p 9-18).

⁴ [The EFTA Surveillance Authority's work programme in the Food and Veterinary Area 2023](#)

During the 2020-2021 epizootic in Europe, migratory wild birds were instrumental in the transmission of the HPAI virus to the poultry population. Since 2021, Norway has notified an increasing number of confirmed HPAI cases, mainly in wild birds.

ESA carried out an audit to Norway in 2023 to verify compliance with the applicable EEA animal health legislation governing the control of HPAI and Newcastle disease (ND).

The scope of the audit included:

- The implementation of the applicable contingency plans;
- The outbreaks of HPAI and ND in poultry and captive birds and confirmations of HPAI in wild birds, that occurred in Norway between 2020 - 2023;
- Animal health conditions governing the production chain for poultry;
- The effectiveness of the measures taken in the affected poultry and captive bird populations and when there is a suspicion and confirmation in wild birds;
- All levels of the national and regional administrations involved in the planning and application of prevention, surveillance and control measures for HPAI and ND;
- The operation of the official laboratory designated to carry out analyses, tests and diagnoses to detect and / or confirm the presence of HPAI and ND.

ESA found that contingency plans are in place which describe what the competent Authority does in the event of an outbreak of a listed disease, though the plans do not include all the information required to launch a rapid response. Notwithstanding, the competent authority successfully managed the disease outbreaks between 2021 – 2023.

Laboratory capacity provides the competent authority with a rapid diagnostic service for suspect cases in commercial poultry holdings though delays occurred with other poultry and wild birds. In addition, the laboratory provides significant scientific and technical assistance to the competent authority related to disease control measures.

1.2 Desk-based analysis of residue monitoring plans

The production process of animals and primary products of animal origin shall be monitored for the purpose of detecting the presence of residues of veterinary medicinal products, pesticides and contaminants in live animals and animal products.

ESA carried out a desk-based analysis of Iceland and Norway's residue monitoring plans for 2023 to verify that they complied with the requirements laid down in the relevant EEA legislation:

- Provide for detection of groups of relevant residues or substances according to type of animal;
- Specify the measures for detection of the presence of relevant substances in live animals, their excrement and body fluids and in animal tissues and products such as meat, milk, eggs and honey; and
- Comply with relevant sampling rules and levels.

ESA found that Iceland and Norway's 2023 residue monitoring control plans mainly met the requirements of the relevant EEA legislation. On 15 December 2023, ESA shared written summaries of the assessments with the two States, highlighting areas for improvement in the 2024 controls.

1.3 Desk-based analysis of controls on organic production and labelling of organic products

Iceland and Norway reported as required on the official controls on organic production and labelling of organic products carried out in 2023. ESA reviewed the information provided against the criteria and minimum targets set out for the controls in the relevant EEA legislation.

Iceland has delegated official controls on organic production to a single control body (Vottunarstofan Tun), except import controls for organic products which rests with the Food and Veterinary Authority (MAST). There are 55 operators certified as organic in Iceland.

ESA notes that all registered operators received a control visit in 2023, and that Iceland was very close to meeting the minimum control frequencies for the risk-based additional controls and unannounced controls. However, the number of samples taken in 2023 was insufficient and did not meet the minimum target. Iceland submitted all required information in the report for 2023, but ESA found that better contextual information would have facilitated the overall assessment on the performance of the controls. Iceland reported that, overall, the level of compliance of certified operators in 2023 was similar to previous years, and irregularities detected did not give rise to any suspicions of fraudulent activities.

Norway has delegated official controls on organic production to a single control body (DEBIO), except import controls for organic products which rests with the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (NFSA). There are 3020 operators certified as organic in Norway.

ESA appreciated the detailed information provided to describe the supervision of the control body by the competent authority (NFSA). Norway also reported that all registered operators had received an annual control visit. However, the number of additional risk-based controls and unannounced controls in 2023 was far below the minimum frequencies. Norway reported lack of resources as the reason for missing the targets, and informed that measures had been implemented to ensure that all minimum control frequencies would be reached in 2024.

ESA finds that controls on organic production are mostly carried out as required in Iceland and Norway, however, the States need to ensure that the minimum targets for additional risk-based controls, unannounced controls and sampling are met. Overall, the information provided by Iceland and Norway indicates a good level of compliance for the sector in both States.

1.4 Fact finding study on welfare of farmed fish

In May and June 2023, ESA carried out a fact-finding study to Norway on welfare of farmed fish which was scheduled in cooperation with the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) of the European Commission, and in agreement with the Norwegian competent authorities. The study was part of a project to provide an overview of the commercial farmed fish sector in the EEA, and specifically on the animal welfare aspects related to it. Information gathered during the study will be published in an overview report prepared by the European Commission, together with information from the other EU Member states included in the project.

2 ENTRY OF ANIMALS AND GOODS INTO THE EEA

EEA States shall designate border control posts for the purpose of performing official controls on certain products coming from countries outside the EEA. ESA verifies that designated border control posts meet the minimum requirements set out in EEA law.

2.1 Desk-based analysis on the re-designation of border control posts

Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls (the OCR)⁵, was incorporated into the EEA Agreement on 27 December 2019 and entered into force on 7 March 2020. In order to comply with the OCR, border inspection posts (BIPs) approved under the previous legal framework had to be re-assessed and re-designated, as relevant.

The EEA States could re-designate existing BIPs as border control posts (BCPs) or control points (CPs), provided that they complied with the minimum requirements referred to in Article 64 of the OCR and those laid down in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1014. It was the responsibility of the EEA States to ensure that any BIPs re-designated as BCPs or CPs fulfilled these requirements.

The main objective of the desk-based analysis was to:

1. Review the re-designation process in Iceland and Norway to verify that the border control posts (BCPs) and control posts (CPs) designated by the national competent authorities under the OCR, complied with the minimum requirements for BCPs (including inspection centres) laid down in the applicable EEA legislation;
2. Evaluate the need for a possible control visit by ESA to verify compliance of the re-designated BCPs and other control facilities, and to define the scope of the potential control visit/s.

ESA found that Iceland and Norway had carried out the re-designation in a thorough manner. BCPs had been audited by the national authorities and the decision of re-designation was based on the outcome of the audits or control visits. Both countries have a good system of internal audits to monitor the compliance of the BCPs and inspection centres.

2.2 Changes to border control posts in the EEA EFTA States

Regulation (EU) 2017/625, the OCR, lays down provisions for the designation of (Article 59) and the suspension of the designation of (Article 63) border control posts (BCPs). Iceland and Norway must notify ESA before designating a new BCP or when there are any substantial changes planned for an existing BCP. Based on the information provided by the States, ESA verifies that the proposed BCP complies with the minimum requirements.

In 2023, Norway designated one new BCP in Haugesund.

The information received from Norway was assessed against the requirements for border control posts laid down in Regulation (EU) 2017/625, in particular Article 64 thereof, and Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1014, in particular Articles 3, 4, 6 and 8 thereof.

ESA concluded that the designation of the new BCP was dependent upon the favourable outcome of an on-site control by ESA. The on-site audit was carried out in January 2023. Following minor improvements at the BCP facilities, Norway confirmed the designation of the new BCP in Haugesund on 17 February 2023.

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products, amending Regulations (EC) No 999/2001, (EC) No 396/2005, (EC) No 1069/2009, (EC) No 1107/2009, (EU) No 1151/2012, (EU) No 652/2014, (EU) 2016/429 and (EU) 2016/2031 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulations (EC) No 1/2005 and (EC) No 1099/2009 and Council Directives 98/58/EC, 1999/74/EC, 2007/43/EC, 2008/119/EC and 2008/120/EC, and repealing Regulations (EC) No 854/2004 and (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Directives 89/608/EEC, 89/662/EEC, 90/425/EEC, 91/496/EEC, 96/23/EC, 96/93/EC and 97/78/EC and Council Decision 92/438/EEC (Official Controls Regulation), as amended and adapted to the EEA Agreement.

3 FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

ESA carries out desk-based analysis and follow up audits, including on-site verification, to verify that Iceland and Norway take appropriate follow-up measures to remedy any specific or systematic shortcomings identified by ESA's controls. ESA will also initiate infringement proceedings for non-implementation or incorrect application of EEA law where necessary.

3.1 General review audits in Iceland and Norway

In 2023, ESA carried out General review audits in both Iceland and Norway. The objective and scope of the audits was to review and assess the progress made by Iceland and Norway in addressing recommendations made by ESA in audits carried out between January 2018 and November 2022.

The Country Profiles⁶ of both States, which summarise the latest information on how the national control systems for food and feed safety, animal health and welfare are organised, were updated in relation to the general review audits. Part 2 of the Country Profile provides an overview of the status of the corrective actions taken by the States to address the recommendations made by ESA and is updated annually based on information received from the States.

ESA found that both countries had made progress in addressing ESA's recommendations. However, limited progress was observed in addressing the recommendations in certain sectors. Figure 2 provides an overview of the progress made by the two States in addressing the recommendations issued by ESA following the audits carried out between 2018 – 2022.

	Necessary action taken - closed	Acceptable progress is being made	Insufficient progress has been made	Total
Iceland	52	30	6	88
Norway	21	33		54

Figure 2: Number and status of recommendations from ESA's audits carried out in Iceland and Norway from January 2018-November 2022

ESA's audits have over the years identified several horizontal weaknesses in both countries' official control systems, and found certain overarching weak links in the official control systems that need to be further addressed by the competent authorities involved. For example, actions taken so far have not always been sufficient to ensure effectiveness of the official controls and adequate enforcement when non-compliances are detected.

3.2 Desk-based analyses on horizontal issues related to official controls and workshops on how to address ESA's recommendations.

Since 2010, ESA's audits have included assessments of horizontal provisions in the OCR applicable to the control systems in Iceland and Norway. In 2023, desk-based analyses of all recommendations issued between 2010 and 2022 were conducted to identify any pattern or systematic weaknesses in the control systems in Iceland and Norway.

⁶ [Country profiles for Iceland and Norway](#)

The outcome of the desk-based analyses confirmed that several horizontal recommendations have been repeatedly issued to the two States. This indicates that the corrective actions notified by the national competent authorities to ESA have not been sufficient to address the issues horizontally across the control systems.

In light of the outcome of the desk-based analyses, ESA conducted workshops both in Iceland and Norway titled '*How to address ESA's recommendations*'. The workshops were prepared in co-operation with the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) of the European Commission and hosted by the Icelandic and Norwegian authorities.

Objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Outline ESA's audit procedures focussing on ways the EEA EFTA States can effectively address recommendations through corrective actions;
2. Discuss the evidence required to give assurance that suitable actions have been taken;
3. Discuss methodologies to ensure that recommendations related to provisions of the OCR applicable to the entire control system are addressed horizontally across all sectors; and,
4. Provide a forum for exchange and discussion with relevant staff of the competent authorities about ESA's audits.

3.3 Infringement procedures

ESA systematically follows up all open recommendations and engages in continuous communication with Iceland and Norway to monitor progress on the implementation of corrective actions by the two States. If Iceland or Norway fail to provide adequate assurances that satisfactory actions are implemented in a timely manner, ESA may decide to initiate infringement proceedings.

On 18 October 2023, ESA adopted Decision No 143/23/COL⁷ to close infringement proceedings towards Norway for the incorrect application of import controls on products of animal origin in transit and/or in transshipment, and customs approved treatment of these products from third countries. ESA sent a letter of formal notice to Norway on 29 September 2021. Subsequently, Norway put in place new legislation and changed administrative practices to address the shortcomings identified by ESA. Following an assessment of the information provided by the Norwegian authorities, ESA concluded that the necessary steps had been taken to fulfil the requirements of EEA law and there were, therefore, no grounds to pursue the case further.

⁷ [EFTA Surveillance Authority Decision No 143/23/COL](#) of 18 October 2023 closing an own initiative case regarding the incorrect application by Norway of certain requirements concerning official controls of consignments in transit and/or transshipment and the customs-approved treatment or use of consignments from third countries.

Part II: OFFICIAL CONTROLS CARRIED OUT BY ICELAND AND NORWAY IN 2023

Food and feed production and distribution spans a broad range of sectors and business activities. Correspondingly, the official controls carried out by the national authorities cover a vast array of areas, including farming, food service, food production and food distribution. Official controls are carried out to ensure that operators comply with relevant EEA requirements and maintain high standards of food and feed safety and animal health and welfare throughout the food chain.

Figure 3 shows the number of registered and approved establishments reported to be operating in the food chain area in Iceland and Norway in 2023 and 2022, and the number of official controls carried out by the national authorities for each year. The overall number of controls reported is significantly lower for 2023 compared to 2022, mainly because of fewer controls reported by Norway. The information reported on the number of non-compliances and enforcement actions taken was incomplete and therefore not comparable and not included in the overview table.

Year	Number of registered and approved operators/establishments	Number of official controls performed
2023	102 552	15 259
2022	103 631	23 148

Figure 3: Number of businesses in the food chain field in the EEA EFTA States and the number of official controls carried out in 2023 and 2022.

4 Annual reports on official controls

According to Article 113(1) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, the EEA States are required to submit annual reports for control activities carried out and the implementation of their multi-annual national control plans (MANCPs). These annual reports are submitted digitally through a standard model form that is set out in the Annex to Regulation (EU) 2019/723⁸. A guidance document has been prepared by the European commission on how to fill in the standard model form⁹.

The aim of the annual reports is to provide an overview of the official controls carried out in the food chain area in the EEA States and to facilitate the collection and transmission of comparable data and the compilation of such data in statistics representative for the EEA EFTA States.

Iceland and Norway submit annual reports on the official controls carried out in the food chain sectors that fall under the scope of the EEA Agreement. Official controls on plant health and genetically modified food and feed are outside the scope of the EEA Agreement.

⁸ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/723 of 2 May 2019 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the standard model form to be used in the annual reports submitted by Member States, as amended and adapted to the EEA Agreement.

⁹ Commission Notice on a guidance document on how to fill in the standard model form in the Annex to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/723 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the standard model form to be used in the annual reports submitted by Member States (52021XC0301; OJ C 71, 1.3.2021, p. 1).

Furthermore, only certain rules concerning animal health and animal welfare are applicable to Iceland¹⁰.

Norway submitted its annual report for 2023 before the deadline of 31 August 2024 and Iceland submitted its report for 2023 on 13 September 2024.

ESA notes that, overall, there has been steady improvement by Iceland and Norway of the information provided in the annual reports. Both States have supplied detailed and informative content for some sections of their respective reports. Iceland has provided a comprehensive account of the overall level of compliance of the control system and the measures taken to ensure the effective operation of the MANCP. Norway has provided detailed information on the official controls and the overall level of compliance in the fields of animal health and animal welfare and on specific control projects.

However, ESA observes that both States had sections with missing information and that not all sections were completed in line with the template requirements. Iceland noted that necessary information was not received from all local competent authorities, while Norway reported that not all required data could be retrieved from the IT system currently in place. ESA emphasizes that Iceland and Norway need to ensure that they have access to, and can retrieve, the necessary information to allow for the submission of complete and consistent data in the required format. Furthermore, ESA notes that the consistency of the information provided for the different sectors could be improved.

4.1 Performance of the official control systems and measures taken to ensure the effective operation of the multi-annual national control plan (MANCP)

Both Iceland and Norway have in place multi-annual national control plans and had set control priorities for 2023.

ESA observes that Regulations (EU) 2022/931¹¹ and (EU) 2022/932¹², which set out minimum control frequencies and uniform practical arrangements for official controls of contaminants in food, only became applicable under the EEA Agreement as of 29 April 2023. The provisions requiring the submission of annual control plans had therefore not entered into force before the submission deadline of 31 March. Consequently, they are not reflected on in this report.

4.1.1 Iceland

4.1.1.1 MANCP and general overview

Iceland reported that the MANCP for 2023-2025 had been finalised in 2022 and published in the beginning of 2023.

Iceland noted that ongoing organisational changes at the Food and Veterinary Authority (MAST) had continued to have an impact on official control activities in 2023, but in the long term they were expected to improve the efficiency of official controls.

Iceland informed that the same six performance indicators for official controls had been set for 2023 as in previous years, three for the central competent authority and three for the local competent authorities. As a result, there is comparable data available of the performance indicators over a period of several years.

¹⁰ See paragraph 2 of the Introductory part of Chapter I of Annex I to the EEA Agreement.

¹¹ *Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/931 of 23 March 2022 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council by laying down rules for the performance of official controls as regards contaminants in food*, incorporated into the EEA Agreement by Decision of the EEA Joint Committee No 78/2023 of 28 April 2023.

¹² *Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/932 of 9 June 2022 on uniform practical arrangements for the performance of official controls as regards contaminants in food, on specific additional content of multi-annual national control plans and specific additional arrangements for their preparation*, incorporated into the EEA Agreement by Decision of the EEA Joint Committee No 78/2023 of 28 April 2023.

For the central competent authority, the targets for 2023 were:

1. 100% of planned controls carried out in primary production, food and feed establishments.
2. At least 90% of control records closed and sent to food business operators within 7 working days.
3. More than 50% of regular controls in food and feed establishments shall be performed without prior notice.

For the local competent authorities, the targets for 2023 were:

1. 100% of planned controls shall be carried out in food establishments.
2. All control records shall be closed within 14 days after the deadline for operators to appeal against decisions expires.
3. More than 75% of controls shall be performed without prior notice.

Iceland reported improvements since 2022 in the performance of reaching some of the set targets, while others had been impacted by employee turnover and structural changes. The ongoing structural changes had a positive impact on the official controls in slaughterhouses, for fishery products and for feed hygiene and animal by-products, while in other sectors there is still room for improvement. The evaluation of the performance to meet the targets set for the local competent authorities is impacted by missing data from the local authorities. This weakens the conclusions that can be drawn on the outcomes of the official controls.

4.1.1.2 Control projects and control priorities

In addition to the regular official controls, Iceland reported on five targeted control projects that were ongoing in 2023:

1. Glazing and water added to food.
Four out of 15 establishments inspected as part of the control project had to amend their food labelling. All relevant establishments had taken the required action before the end of 2023. The project will continue in 2024.
2. Animal welfare in beef farming.
3. Animal welfare both during catching and handling of hens and during slaughter. The project will continue in 2024.
4. The use of antibiotics. The project will continue in 2024 and 2025.
5. Animal welfare at the time of slaughter.

The project revealed certain shortcoming in stunning equipment and/or lairage management which have subsequently been addressed and rectified.

4.1.2 Norway

4.1.2.1 MANCP and general overview

Norway reported that the multi-annual national control plan had been updated on 1 September 2023 to reflect the reorganisation of the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (NFSA), and changes made to the procedures of preparing control plans. A new strategic compass for the NFSA was also included. Norway informed that the aim was to have official controls and other control activities more realistically planned based on available resources and competences. The purpose was also to be clearer about the overall priorities and goals of the official controls and to focus resources on the areas where there are challenges which could have a negative impact on human, animal or plant health, animal welfare or the environment.

4.1.2.2 Control projects and control priorities

Norway reported on the following control projects and control priorities for 2023:

1. Food safety: Norway reports that it has focused on food business operators' HACCP-based procedures and hygiene practice. Compliance at slaughterhouses has been identified as one of the prioritized areas. New guidance material for inspections in slaughterhouses has been produced and is being rolled out for use in inspections during 2023/2024.
2. Fish health and welfare: Norway has focused on checking compliance concerning fish health and fish welfare, with a total of 630 official controls performed. A total of 1408 grow-out farms and 259 juvenile production premises were inspected. Norway reports one or more non-compliances in 139 cases, and that 93 of the cases resulted in administrative actions. The measures consisted of, among other things, compulsory fines and orders to change internal routines and equipment.
3. Farms with chronically poor animal welfare: Norway reports that farms with chronically poor animal welfare, has been the focus area the last few years. The farms are not limited to specific categories of animals, but the focus area applies horizontally to all animals. The requirements in question concern feed, water, the treatment of sick and injured animals, and the general care of the animals. Based on the experience from the official control, Norway made an action plan to tackle the identified challenges. Norway reports that the action plan has helped them attain its goals the past few years.
4. Use of pesticides by professional users near drinking water sources: Norway reports that a total of 25 inspections were conducted at farms close to drinking water sources. Although the overall compliance level was satisfactory, some non-compliances were identified. These concern record-keeping, the duty to reduce the risk of water contamination, and storage, dosage and disposal of pesticides. Norway finds that professional pesticide users struggle with the labels on plant protection products, leading to incorrect use.
5. Fraudulent and deceptive practices: Norway reports on two targeted campaigns as well as an on-going emphasis on import control in this field.

The first campaign focused on illegal use of additives and use of non-approved additives in fresh /frozen tuna. The second campaign aimed at farmed fish that have wounds, deformities, serious treatment errors or other defects. Norway reports that it filed three police notifications concerning food and food safety in 2023.

Norway reports an ongoing emphasis on controlling import of dogs and cat, which follows the Norwegian participation in an EU Coordinated Control Project on

pets¹³. Norway reports that it has identified irregularities and deceptive practices which have been notified in the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (iRASFF)¹⁴. Some of the cases have also been notified to the Norwegian National Authority for Investigation and Prosecution of Economic and Environmental Crime. Norway reports that it filed 13 police notifications concerning animal health in 2023.

PART III: OVERALL FUNCTIONING OF THE CONTROL SYSTEM IN ICELAND AND NORWAY

ESA has verified that both Iceland and Norway have established and functioning control systems that ensure the application of relevant EEA requirements. The national competent authorities in both countries have carried out official controls in accordance with their respective multi-annual national control plans and have submitted the required annual reports to ESA.

ESA has noted a marked improvement in the information provided in the annual reports submitted by Iceland and Norway, however, there are some areas with room for improvement. The annual reports from both States had missing data and inconsistencies in the information provided. This impacts ESA's possibilities to draw comprehensive conclusions on the official controls carried out by the States and to provide an overview of the controls performed in the EEA EFTA States. ESA's own controls, including audits and desk-based analyses, have also identified certain recurring issues and systematic weaknesses in the control systems that have not been sufficiently addressed. ESA continues to work closely with Iceland and Norway to ensure that identified shortcomings are addressed and rectified.

Overall, ESA concludes that the control systems in Iceland and Norway are generally effective in ensuring compliance with EEA rules in the food and veterinary area.

¹³ Article 112 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls empowers the Commission to adopt coordinated plans organised on an ad hoc basis. These coordinated control programmes are adopted to better understand the extent of malpractices or fraudulent practices in a certain sector. They rely on harmonised sampling and methods of analysis to be implemented by all the participating countries, for a limited period, so that the results can be properly evaluated.

¹⁴ The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (iRASFF) is system that was established to ensure the rapid exchange of information between EEA States to support swift reaction by control authorities in cases of risks to public health resulting from the agri-food chain. The platform supports the work of the Alert and Cooperation Network (ACN) which is made up of members from all the EEA states and facilitates the exchange of administrative information and cooperation on official controls in the agri-food chain.

ANNEX 1 – LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

ADIS	Animal Disease Information System
BCP	Border Control Post
CA	Competent Authority
CCA	Central Competent Authority
Control programme	ESA's multiannual control programme for the period 2022 to 2026
EEA	European Economic Area
EEA Agreement	Agreement on the European Economic Area
ESA	EFTA Surveillance Authority
EU	European Union
FBO	Food business operator
IC	Inspection Center
LCA	Local competent authorities
MANCP	Single integrated multi annual national control plan
MAST	The Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority
MRL	Maximum residue limit
NAP	National Action Plan
NFSA	Norwegian Food Safety Authority
OCR	Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products (Official Controls Regulation)
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
Work programme	ESA's annual work programme in the food and veterinary area