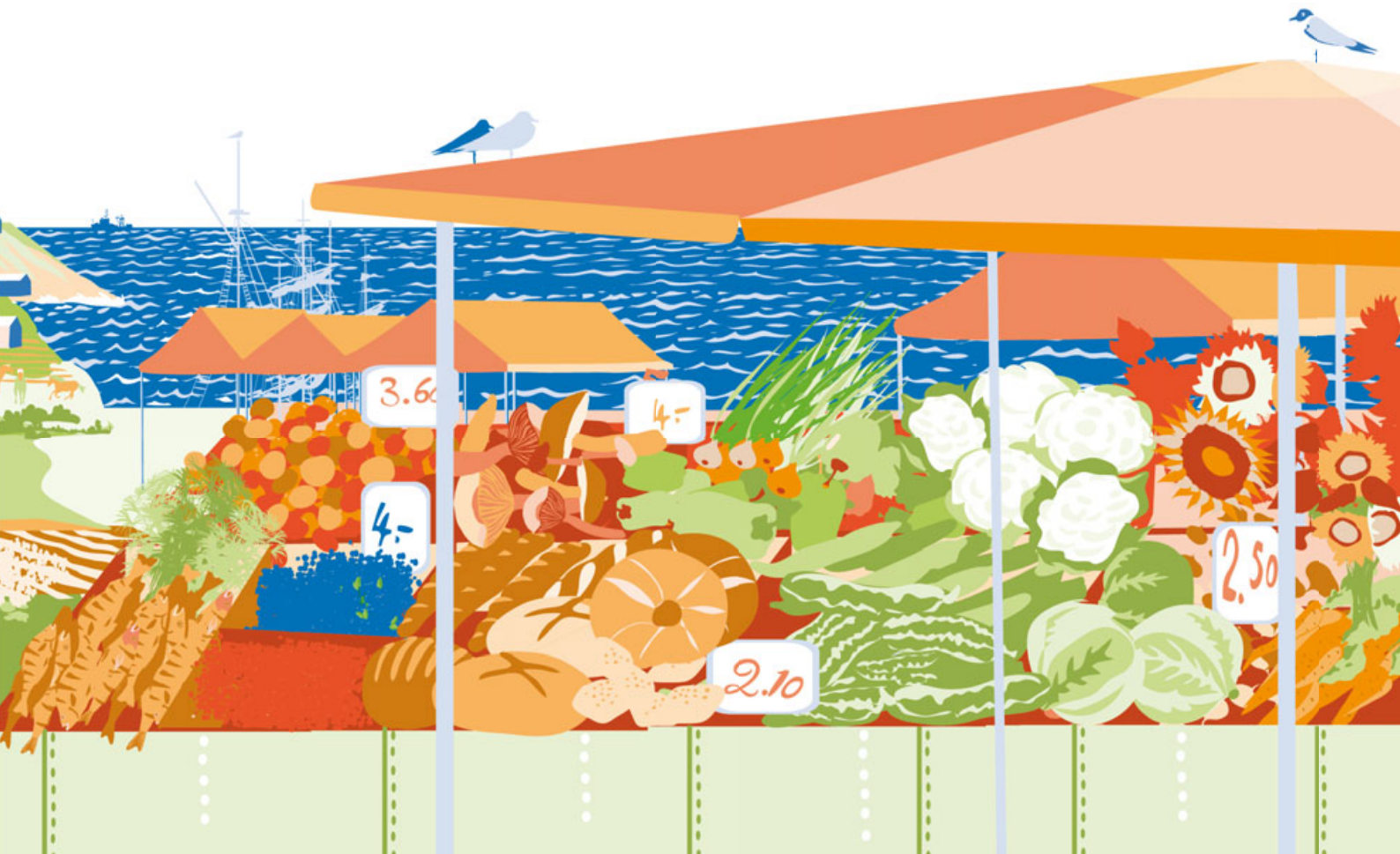




# FOOD SAFETY IN FINLAND

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry



## FOOD SAFETY STARTS ON THE FIELD AND EXTENDS TO THE TABLE

The safety of foods produced and consumed in Finland is internationally of high standard. The roots of food safety are in the Finnish countryside, but in the end safety is created by joint efforts all through the chain. The basic requirements for safety are written down in the law, but these are complemented by the companies' own quality and safety systems.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry steers quality and safety in the whole food chain. A functioning food chain ensures that the products are genuine and the sources of raw material can be traced.



## SAFE FERTILISERS

The quality of products of plant origin and, through this, food quality and human health depend on high-quality fertilisers that are fit for their specific purpose. In Finland selenium has been added to fertiliser for more than 20 years to promote human and animal health.

Studies have proven that Finnish soil and waters are exceptionally sensitive to harmful impacts of cadmium. This is why Finland restricts the maximum cadmium levels in fertilisers so that on the European scale the cadmium content of fertilisers used in arable farming and horticulture is very low.





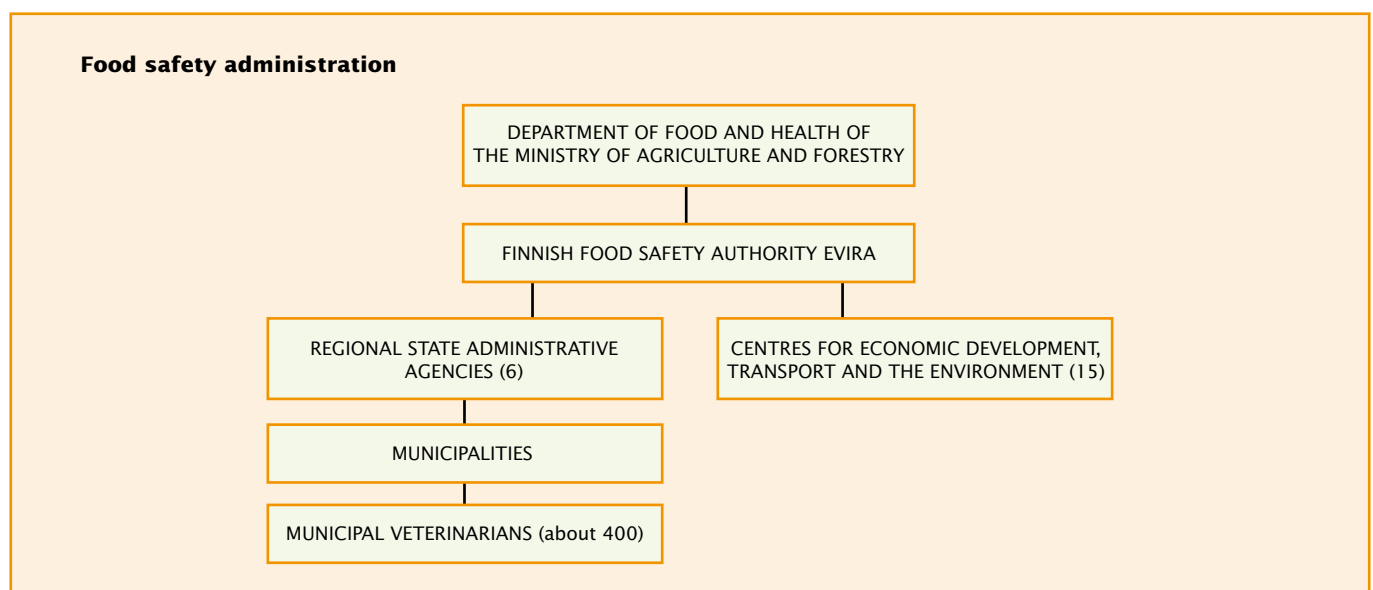
## MINISTRY STEERS QUALITY AND SAFETY IN THE FOOD CHAIN

**The Department of Food and Health of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry** steers the safety and quality of foodstuffs and agricultural inputs, animal health and welfare and plant health.

**The Finnish Food Safety Authority Evira** steers the control and performs inspections as well as conducts scientific research and risk assessments.

**The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment** assist the Finnish Food Safety Authority in the control and inspections of agricultural inputs and plant health.

**Municipalities** are responsible for practical control of environmental healthcare and veterinary practice in their respective territories.



## FEW PROBLEMS WITH QUARANTINE PESTS

The incidence of quarantine pests is exceptionally low in Finland. Some of the most serious pests have never been found in our country. Thanks to this, Finland has a protected zone status, which means that special efforts are made to prevent the spread of pests.

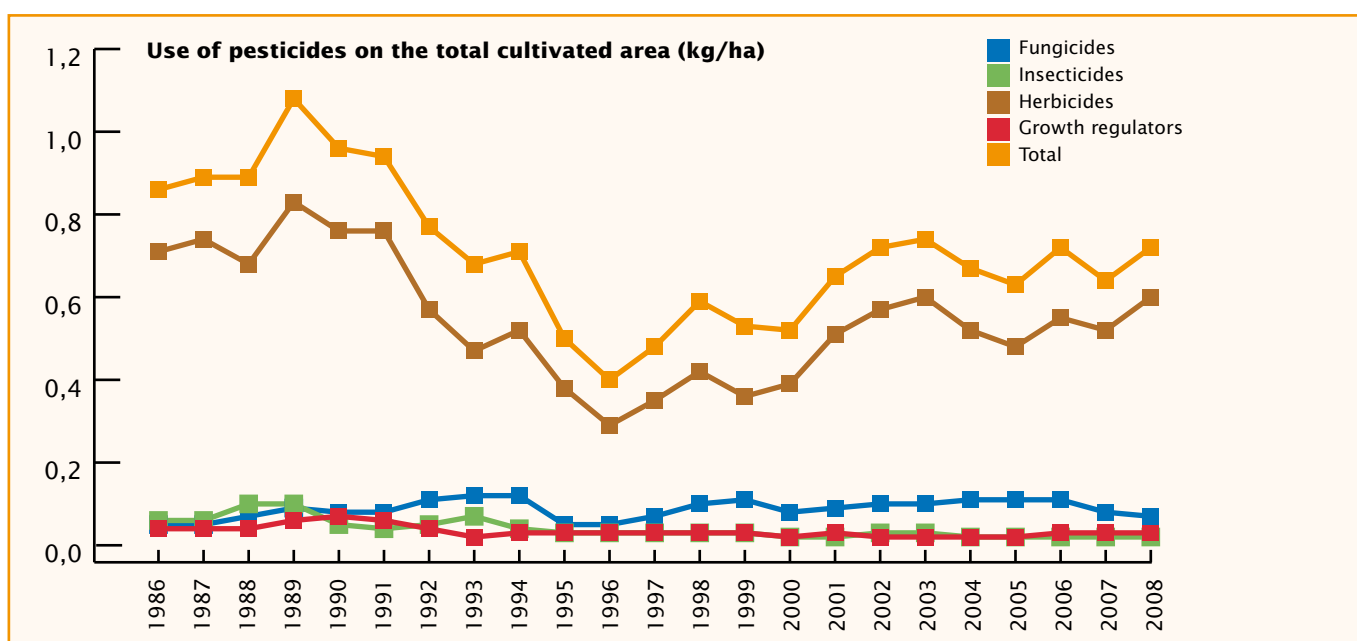
The incidence of pests is monitored by inspecting the plants and plant products. Plant inspections comprise on-the-spot checks of areas under cultivation, market control of plants and inspections of plant consignments exported from and imported to Finland.



## USE OF CHEMICAL PESTICIDES HAS BEEN MINIMISED

In Finland pesticides are used according to a verified need so that a right amount is applied on the right site at the optimal time. The annual use of chemical pesticides is only 0.7 kilograms per hectare.

The quantities of pesticides used have dropped significantly since 1980, partly thanks to the Agri-Environmental Programme. Use of pesticides can be avoided by selecting only resistant plants for cultivation, through crop rotation and by using optimal cultivation technology on each site. The cold winter also destroys pests most efficiently. Residue levels of pesticides in Finnish foodstuffs are very low.



## NATIONAL SALMONELLA CONTROL PROGRAMME

Finland has applied the national control programme for salmonella since 1995. The control covers bovines, pigs and poultry and the meat obtained from these as well as eggs. The aim of the programme is to protect the consumers against salmonella infections transmitted via foodstuffs of animal origin. Salmonella finding always leads to measures to prevent the spread of the infection and to establish its origin.

Salmonella is extremely rare on Finnish farms. In accordance with the objective set in the national programme, the incidence of salmonella in the production animals and products derived from these has stayed less than one per cent.

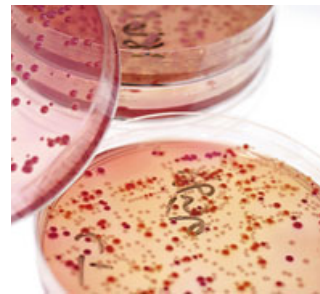
The incidence of salmonella in feedingstuffs is also controlled very closely. For comprehensive control, samples are taken by both the authorities and feed manufacturers. The authorities also supervise the companies' own check systems as well as feedingstuffs already placed on the market.

If any salmonella is found in feed, the marketing and use of the batch is prohibited. Compound feeds contaminated with salmonella are destroyed and the source of the contamination is established. Batches already placed on the market are removed from the sale and destroyed.

## PIONEER IN THE HEALTHCARE OF PRODUCTION ANIMALS

In Finland the health of production animals is ensured through a national animal healthcare system. The healthcare work is based on a contract between the veterinarian and producer. The contract requires that a healthcare plan is prepared for the farm and the instructions concerning animal welfare and diseases and the medication of animals are complied with.

Promoting welfare is backed up in broad collaboration between the authorities and various actors in the field, such as the industry, research and producer organisations. The objectives include reducing the use of medicines, enhancing the preventive work and improving the follow-up on farms.



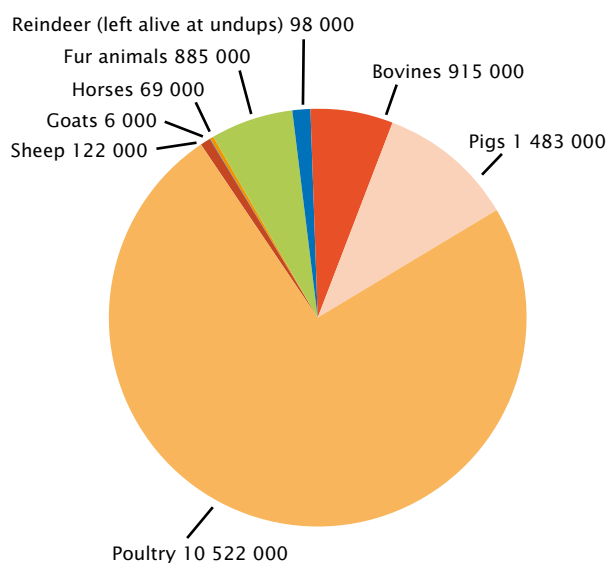


## ANIMAL WELFARE A HIGH PRIORITY

Animal welfare influences the quality of the products of animal origin in a significant way. Studies have shown that Finnish consumers consider the welfare of production animals as very important. Under the animal healthcare system there are voluntary welfare programmes available to livestock farms.

The work done on farms is based on national animal welfare objectives for egg production and pig and cattle husbandry. The national animal welfare strategy covers all production animals. Improving animal welfare is also promoted through various kinds of support payments. High professional skills and animal-friendly attitudes among the producers are important for enhancing animal welfare.

**Number of production animals of different species**



## FOOD CONTROL STARTS IN PRIMARY PRODUCTION

The task of food control is to ensure the safety, quality standard and composition of all foodstuffs and prevent and remove food-related health damages.

The main responsibility for food safety rests with operators in the food sector. Food operators have been obligated to carry out own checks for a long time. In practice most of the food control work is done by municipal veterinarians and health inspectors, except at slaughterhouses, which are supervised by Veterinary Officers appointed by the state to carry out meat inspections. Sub-regional food control units to be set up in the whole country aim to improve the cooperation between municipalities.

Traceability is a key element in food control. Food and feed operators must be able to trace all foods and feeds, animals used for food production, and other substances which may have been used at all production, processing and distribution stages.



## COMPOSITION AND MANUFACTURE OF FOOD IS REGULATED

Food safety is ensured by regulating the composition, manufacture and labelling of foodstuffs.

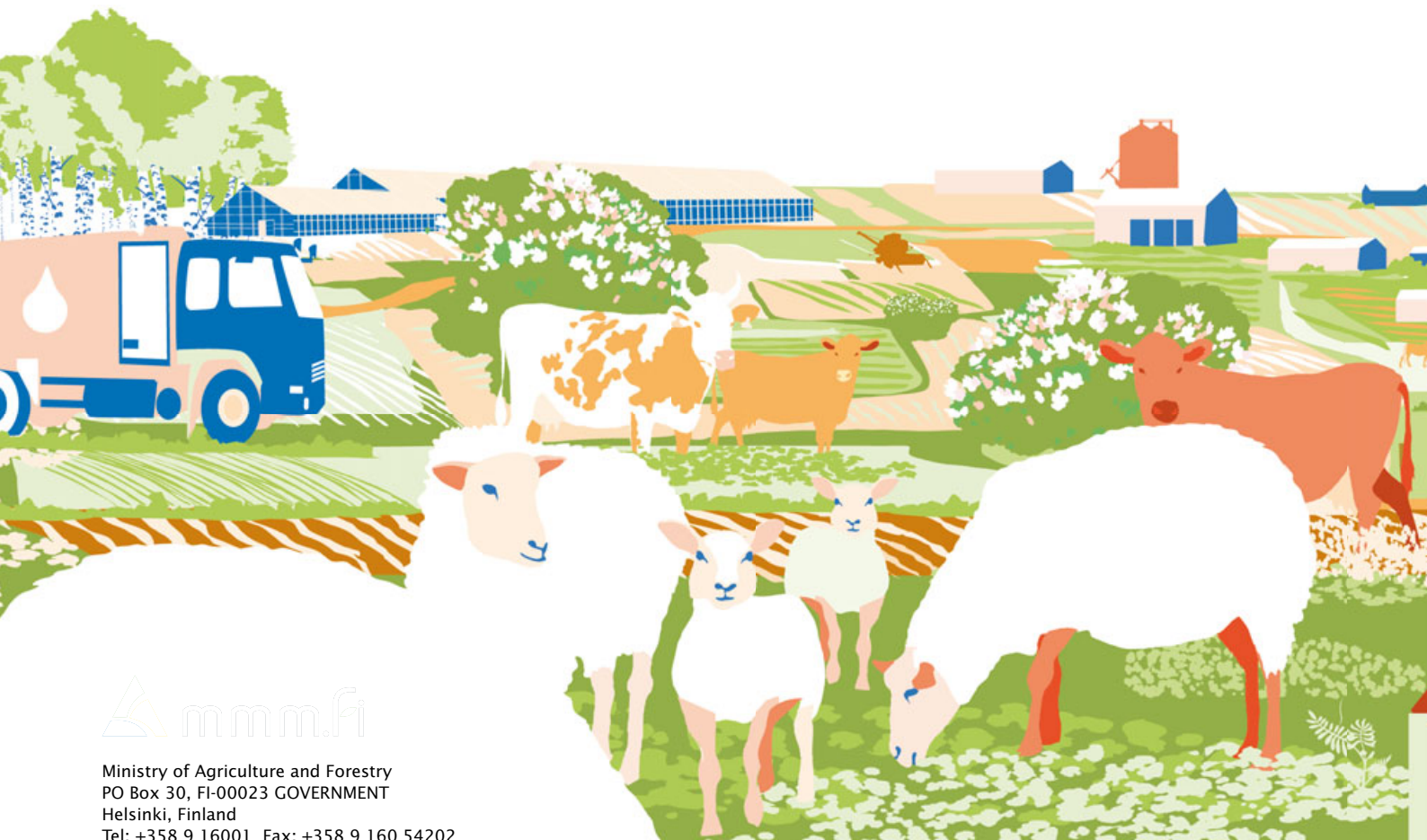
Food premises must be approved and suitable for handling foodstuffs.

Only approved additives, flavourings and enzymes which have been assessed for safety may be used in food manufacture. Maximum allowable levels have been set for contaminants in foodstuffs. A licence and safety assessment is required for placing genetically modified foodstuffs on the market.

## PACKAGE LABELLING SERVES THE CONSUMER

Labelling of food packages allows the consumers to compare different products and choose the most suitable one. Package labels give information on the substances contained in the food, origin of the product, production practice and appropriate use of the product as well as make sure that no products that have passed their expiry date are purchased.

Labels also assist the consumers in making healthy food choices. Nutrition values and nutrition and health claims, in particular, tell about the beneficial properties of foodstuffs.



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