

Business Plan of the Belgian Food Safety Agency

2015 - 2017



Belgian
Food Safety
Agency



Business Plan of the BFSA

2015 - 2017

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Belgian
Food Safety
Agency

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1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the dioxin crisis of 1999, the government decided that all control and inspection services which are dealing with food safety had to be reorganized so as to improve their efficiency. This led to the creation of the Belgian Food Safety Agency by the law of 4 February 2000. The BFSA is a semi-governmental type A institution.

The first business plan had been drawn up by the then CEO at the explicit request of the government so as to have a policy document for the BFSA. In his business plan of 15 September 2000, approved by the government on 22 November 2000, the major policy options, still actual today, were already outlined. It provided for the control of the entire chain by installing a global monitoring program, the necessity of self-checking systems of which its implementation can also be verified by neutral third parties. The basic elements of self-checking were described - the registration of FFBO's, traceability, mandatory notification and the application of internationally accepted standards such as HACCP. The need for an adapted system for smaller enterprises had been recognized too. The funding of the BFSA had to be neutral on the budgetary level, with contributions by the sectors for funding the control activities in function of their risk. Enterprises having implemented

and maintained a self-checking system had to obtain a financial stimulus.

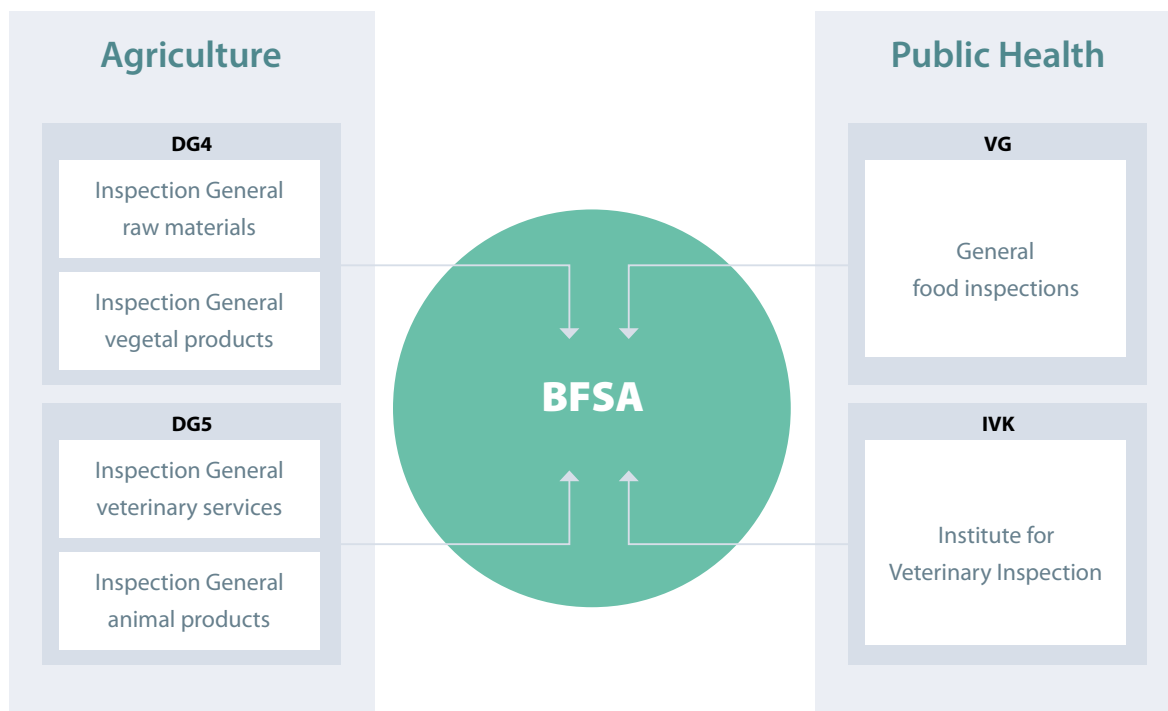
A collaboration with the different stakeholders had to be aimed at.

The structure of the BFSA and the integration of the different services were roughly laid down, including a crisis cell, a communication cell and a consumer helpline.

The initial focus was on the development of new structures, the integration of several services (from the Ministries of Agriculture, Public Health and the Institute for veterinary Inspection) and the development of a new control policy.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The English version of the Business Plan is not an official document. Some passages have been summarized. Mainly in the description of the organization and the chapter on the social, economic and administrative context.

Origin of the BFSA

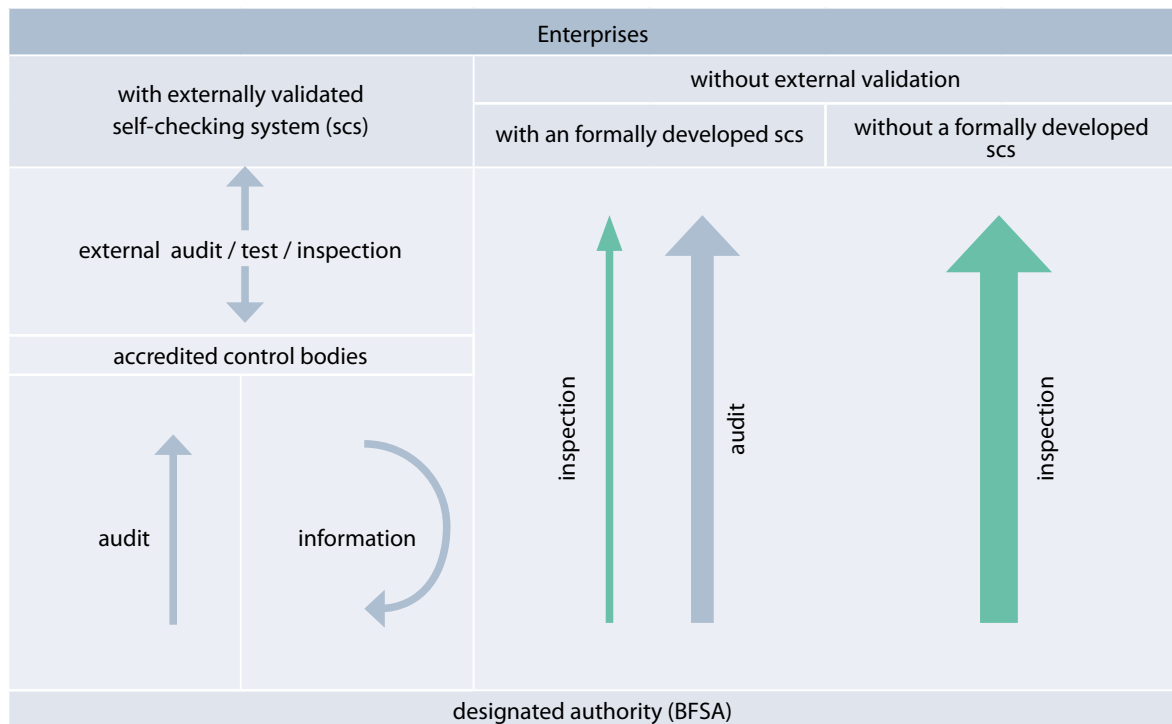


From 2002 the development of the BFSA accelerated, based on the work which had been carried out and after a new board of directors had been designated. In 2003, the Agency had a proper budget and in that same year the Royal Decree concerning self-checking came into force. In 2004, the integration of the different services had finally been completed and for the first time, the Agency worked on the basis of a global programme for all sectors, products and risks based on a risk assessment.

After finalizing the internal integration and the foundations had been laid for a new policy, it was necessary to draw up a new business plan which focused on the development of a reliable organisation and operational efficiency.

The second business plan, drawn up for the period 2005-2008, started from the core process of the BFSA, its relation with the stakeholders, the new structure and a SWOT-analysis implemented internally as well as externally. A strategic vision was developed, the aim of which was to create an added value in 5 broad result areas - realizing a safe food chain, a reliable image, maintaining a stable legal framework, pursuing the complementarity with the sectors and an excellent operational service. The vision was developed in 11 strategic targets. The implementation of the validation of the self-checking systems by third parties and by the BFSA, the external certification of the quality systems of the BFSA, an efficient risk assessment, an integrated IT system, communication to consumers and FFBO's and of course a new financing system were some of the innovative goals set out for the Agency.

The stimulation of self-checking



The business plans 2009-2011 and 2012-2014 were not only based on the realizations of the preceding business plans, but each also emphasized different aspects, such as a context analysis, administratively as well as socio-economically, the fine-tuning of the financing, inspection frequencies were determined and the inspection was formalized. Attention was paid to the FFBO's' and consumers' acceptance, to transparency, to the stimulation of self-checking, to cutting the red tape and to the export of products from the agro-food industry, the development of quality assurance and of efficient IT-tools, more training for FFBO's,...

2005-2008	2009-2011	2012-2014
Efficient risk assessment Efficient and effective crisis management	An increasingly safe food chain	A safer food chain
	An agency accepted by food business FFBO's and recognized by society	An agency accepted by food business FFBO's and recognized by society and the consumers in particular
Communication to consumers and enterprises	A transparent Agency	A transparent Agency
From inspection to audit	The stimulation of self-checking	The expansion of self-checking in the food chain
	The way to administrative simplification	Administrative simplification
Competent and highly trained staff members	A professional and demanding Agency in the field of results	A modern human resources policy
Public-private cooperation	An optimal public-private cooperation	
A good cooperation with other public services	A constructive and efficient cooperation with other public services	
Integrated information and data management	An integrated IT-management	An ambitious IT plan
Quality assurance	Quality guarantees on services rendered	
		Reliable and high-performing laboratories
Update of the existing funding mechanisms		
	Sustainable development & the BFSA	
Integrating the European context	International context	International trade: improving services provided to exporters and achieve international recognition of the Agency

Meanwhile, the list of the realisations is impressive:

- the integration of the old services into a new agency in less than 2 years,
- the creation of new services - a communication cell, a crisis cell, a consumer helpline, a quality service including internal audit,
- the optimization of their functioning via a BPR program (business process reengineering): [Food@work](#),
- the introduction of the concept of self-checking validated by independent third parties,
- a control program, based on risk assessment which is based on a fixed methodology with inspections carried out according to certain frequencies and a sampling program which is to be adjusted yearly for the entire food chain,
- a new financing system which was adjusted later on as the data on which it was based, improved
- the certification of nearly all activities under the ISO 9001, 17020, 17025 and EMAS standards,
- the systematic and regular inquiry of the stakeholders from which a SWOT-analysis is deduced and which was used as an input for the business plan,
- a regular consultation with all stakeholders in the Advisory Committee and during the sector meetings,
- a set of crisis scenarios
- the organisation of crisis exercises on a regular basis,
- an efficiently working Scientific Committee,
- a systematic consultation with all stakeholders regarding new initiatives,
- a comprehensive website,
- an extended system in order to develop the implementation of self-checking systems,
- the financial reward for those FFBO's who have a validated self-checking system,
- 2 campaigns concerning administrative simplification with quite some real and visible realizations in the field,
- a fruitful cooperation with the private partners (veterinarians, laboratories, associations for controlling animal diseases, certification organisms and sector organisations) and other public services, which are formalized in agreements and protocols,
- a well functioning system of administrative fines,
- impartial inspections based on checklists,
- a fully integrated IT-system enabling the collection of data from controls and inspections. These data are at one's disposal in order to draw up reports, and are also at the disposal of the food and feed businesses FFBO's (FFBO's) .
- a full internal audit and an independent Audit committee,
- a mediation service,
- reinforcement of the services responsible for supporting export,
- an service to vulgarize food safety systems
- the food safety barometer, the plant and animal health barometers,
- a very transparent Agency,
- high-performing laboratories,
- well structured corporate services,
- a high-yield recovery system for fees and contributions,
- a modern human resources management.
- management based on business plans which are developed into strategic and operational plans.

These realisations can serve as a basis for developing the new business plan. The approach will be directed both by aiming at a continuous improvement and by being responsive to new societal trends. But despite this solid basis, the BFSa faces a new and important challenge - maintaining the maximum of its activities in times of major cutbacks.

In general these cutbacks imply :

- Staff appropriations will be reduced by 4% in 2015 and by an additional 2% in the following years.
- Running and investment costs will be reduced by 20% in 2015 and by an additional 2% in the following years.

For the BFSa, these cutbacks are only applied on the part of the expenditure covered by public funding (60%). This implies that the budget of € 176,059,936 in 2014 has been reduced to a budget of € 162,436,732 in 2015 or a reduction of € 13,623,204. Cutbacks will have an impact on the organization itself as well as on the partners with whom it collaborates. Compared with 2008, when expenditure budget still amounted to € 186 million it is clear that in recent years significant efforts have been made to preserve the BFSa-activities, but these additional efforts will certainly have an effect on services rendered to consumers and enterprises.

2. Management summary

The future of the BFSA can be summarized as follows: maintaining its core missions, continuing the policy with a focus on the protection of the consumer and the successfully performing food and feed business FFBO's as well as a cautious evolution towards an even better organization in budgetary challenging times.

With a clear mission, vision and values, the strategic and operational targets are described with their corresponding KPI for the next 3 years, but with a perspective of 5 years, the duration of the parliamentary term.

The BFSA continues to successfully implement its inspection and analyses programmes which are based on risk analysis, together with a flanking policy aimed at high quality inspections and a maximum number of FFBO's having favourable inspection results. Administrative simplification, attention to the specific situation of the self-employed, the micro-enterprises and the small and medium enterprises, the fact that all necessary instruments are put at the disposal of FFBO's and maintaining good communication are also a part of this policy. The BFSA will be very understanding for those FFBO's who are well intended but it will implement a hard handed enforcement policy towards obstinate or fraudulent FFBO's.

The important savings imposed to all public services also have an impact on the BFSA's functioning. Less staff members and less operating grants will inevitably lead to choices regarding actions and activities, in consultation with the stakeholders. However, the inspection and analyses programme shall be guarded as much as possible, whereas the activities covered by the revenues for the Agency will be kept intact.

Consultation with all stakeholders is considered of paramount importance, but in the end the BFSA remains responsible for the policy pursued in the context of the European and national regulations. The BFSA is aiming at a complete transparency on its functioning by public reporting with the food safety, animal health and plant health barometers as overall indicators.

For the export too, the BFSA continues to make important efforts, but this can only lead to results if this fits in with a global policy fixed by the different public services concerned - federal as well as regional - and in consultation with the sector organizations.

An important package of tasks is to be entrusted to third parties. Institutions such as the CODA-CERVA, DGZ and ARSIA, and the contracted veterinarians too, continue to be crucial partners. The BFSA will continue to pursue a fruitful collaboration with veterinary practitioners who are the first line of defense in animal health.

Quality and effectiveness still remain at the center of the approach. The BFSA keeps its certified quality systems and evaluates its processes continuously on improvement possibilities with regard to efficiency, internal control and risk management.

As in many organizations, the motivation and competence of its collaborators are the BFSA's most essential resources. In the next years, the BFSA wishes to remain an excellent employer, despite the budgetary measures.

3. The BFSA as an organization

3.1. Mission, vision and values

3.1.1. Mission

The mission of the BFSA is to preserve the safety of the food chain and the quality of our food in order to protect the health of humans, animals and plants.

The BFSA integrates all control services that are competent for the entire food chain. The BFSA is not only competent for controlling food, feed, fertilisers and phytopharmaceuticals, but is also responsible for sanitary (animal diseases) and phytosanitary (plant sector) prevention and control measures. Laying down operational rules on controls, certification, infrastructure standards to be complied with by food chain FFBO's are also a part of its mission. The BFSA is also in charge of communication regarding all issues concerning the BFSA, in particular of informing consumers.

The control tasks delegated to the BFSA are :

- the smoking ban,
- the quality controls at import and export of goods,
- the control on the welfare of production animals.

3.1.2. General vision

The BFSA fulfills its mission with the greatest care by adopting a professional attitude so that national and foreign consumers as well as the FFBO's can keep their trust in the safety of our food chain.

The BFSA's mission extends over the entire food chain and animal and plant health. An ever more integrated and end-to-end approach guarantees an optimal surveillance of all activities in its fields of competence.

Regarding its control methodology, the BFSA stands for a systematic and harmonized approach providing documented, complete and transparent controls. It is based on a scientifically based inspection and sampling programme evolving with new needs and risks. In addition, the BFSA makes sure that non-compliances are dealt with efficiently, together with its enforcement policy focused on behavioural change.

The BFSA supplies all relevant information concerning the whole life cycle as complete and appropriate as possible. Thus it supports and encourages the self-checking development at the FFBO's who are active in the Belgian food chain, with a validation/certification as a cornerstone. As regards the B2C, the Smiley remains the calling card for hygiene and it represents an important sign to the consumer.

The FAFSC is aiming at a preventive and proactive food security policy. It carries out crises exercises, works at an early signal capture, anticipates on emerging risks and follows the latest trends in its field of activity. It is ready to act efficiently, whenever necessary.

Moreover, as a public institution it is the BFSA's duty to encourage the general interest, among which the promotion of the economic development, prosperity and well-being.

The BFSA is always looking for a good equilibrium between its legal missions, the different wishes of all its clients and the general interest of our society. This is not only translated into an ambitious strategic plan but also in its daily operational activities. In questioning its own activities critically and permanently and in understanding the processes well, the BFSA is able to grow and improve itself continuously.

The BFSA continues to organize itself as efficiently and effectively as possible, with a minimum of charges for the inspected FFBO's. The Agency is aiming at an optimal cooperation with all actors in the internal and external processes. It sees to it that a balance is maintained between the tasks executed by the Agency itself and the tasks it delegates. The Agency works closely with its partners so that these goals can be achieved successfully.

The Agency collaborates not only with the representatives of the parties directly concerned - the FFBO's controlled - but also, and just as important, with the consumers' associations, the federal, regional and local authorities and the non-governmental organizations that are important for its mission. This structured and systematic consultation with all stakeholders allows the development of a policy that is efficient, proportional and that can count on a broad public support.

To measure is to know. The BFSA uses all data available so as to manage the internal processes, to report systematically on the activities, to allow the consumer to make a conscious choice as well as to draw up a state of affairs regarding food safety by means of barometers. Thus, the BFSA has a good indication at its disposal on how efficiently the Agency itself as well as the FFBO's react on various challenges.

The BFSA is active internationally and it has a network at its disposal enabling to cooperate on European and international policies, to ensure the image of Belgian products and in doing so is able to facilitate the export of Belgian products. The delivered certificates are, so to speak, a quality mark for Belgian products.

3.1.3. Values

The BFSA has a clear social mission. Its mission and vision require a strong engagement and a strong sense of responsibility. Within its field of activities in Belgium and on an international level, the Agency can, with good reason, be proud of its accomplishments.

The BFSA is a professional organization with clear targets and aims at the optimal realization of these targets. An organization that's considerate of its stakeholders' needs as much as possible. That is why the consumers, the FFBO's as well as the staff members are consulted, so that the implemented policy is supported as broadly as possible.

The BFSA aims to be a flexible organization which implements its mission with great care so that confidence in food chain safety continues to be guaranteed. It places great importance on a sustainable strategy and on a human dimension and invests continuously in its staff members so that its assignments will be carried out as good as possible and with a keen eye for an ever changing and varied society.

Its mission is carried out in a way which reflects its identity and the organization's culture and where its shared values are its core business. These values constitute a solid base for the organization, are lived by everyday and serve as a standard and motivator for every collaborator.

When preparing this business plan, we have analysed and completed the existing values, and we have expressed these in a concrete manner, thanks to the active contributions of staff members and management. Spreading and acquiring these values will be integrated in its policy and will be supported by specific actions.

Open

We communicate **in time, customer and transparent**. We enter **into a constructive manner** and pay attention to our interlocutors. We **encourage participation** open to the **ideas of everyone**.

Professional

The BFSA is a **dynamic** organization with committed collaborators. We carry out our mission in an **efficient, qualitatively outstanding and targeted** manner which fits in the needs and expectations of our clients. Exchange of knowledge and permanent training guarantee our **expertise**.

Trust

We create a positive environment in which **opportunities are given** and everyone takes its **responsibility**. The focus is on **loyalty** and a constructive unlimited **cooperation**.

ized, clear
dialogue in
attention to all
icipation and are

Respect

Respect for **man and environment**
is at the central point of our acting.
We listen, are understanding **and act**
humanely. We use our resources in a
sustainable and efficient way.

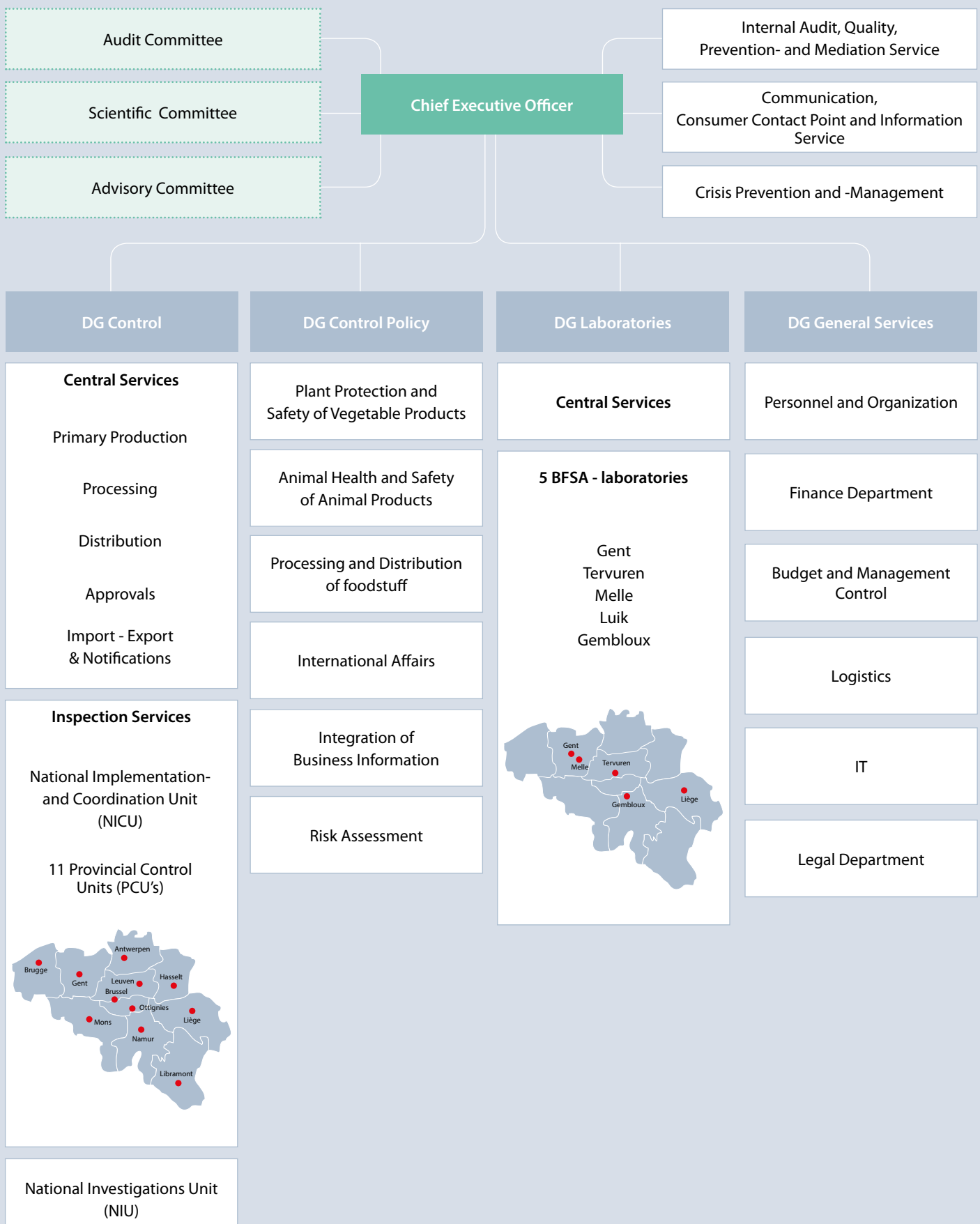
Equitable

We are **fair** and **reasonable.**
Our actions and decisions are **proportional** and
acceptable.



Integrity

We act according to our values.
We are **honest, correct** and treat confi-
dential information **discretely.**
We are **reliable and conscientious**
when carrying out our services.



3.2. Organizational structure of the BFSA

In order to realize its mission the BFSA can count on -

- approximately 1,300 collaborators divided over -
 - the central administration (with approx. 450 collaborators), (ISO 9001 certified)
 - 11 provincial control units (PCUs) accredited according to ISO 17020 (with some 700 collaborators),
 - 5 internal laboratories accredited according to ISO 17025 (with some 150 collaborators),
 - a service dedicated to coordinated investigations against fraud (National Investigation Unit (NIU)),
- a close collaboration with various federal and regional public services, including police and customs, and with private institutions;
- some 680 independent veterinarians on assignment, representing some 400 FTE, who carry out control missions (mainly ante- and post-mortem inspections in slaughterhouses, inspections regarding animal welfare) and certification missions under the supervision of the BFSA. When veterinarians on assignment carry out assignments on behalf of the BFSA, they have the status of official veterinarians;
- a network of about 50 external laboratories, approved by the BFSA, as well as 9 national reference laboratories;
- a budget of approximately 162.4 million € for 2015.

A more detailed description of the structure of the Agency can be found in the FVO Country profile via the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/country_profiles/details.cfm?co_id=BE

3.3. A new process model for the BFSA

Shortly after its start in 2002, the BFSA chose a new approach for its working method and reviewed all its activities/processes in a BPR project ([Food@work](#)) which ran from 2003 up to 2006. A high level model of activities had been drawn up and the core process of the BFSA had been defined in the business plan 2006-2008. The basic idea was a general approach covering all entities of the organization. The BPR project has been implemented successfully, but for this new business plan, it was inevitable to update that model resulting in a new process model. This process model is illustrated in the “cartography” scheme.

Process means a collection of coherent activities affecting each other and transforming inputs into outputs (ISO 9001). The cartography of the processes offers an overall view on the organization’s functioning and makes it possible to identify the main activities carried out so as to meet the client’s needs.

The aim of three strategic processes or control processes is to plan, organize and follow-up operational activities. It concerns risk assessment, the development of the business plan and consultation with the stakeholders. The stakeholders are persons or instances that have a direct, social, financial or other interest in the services and success of the BFSA, or whose functioning has an influence or effect on the organization.

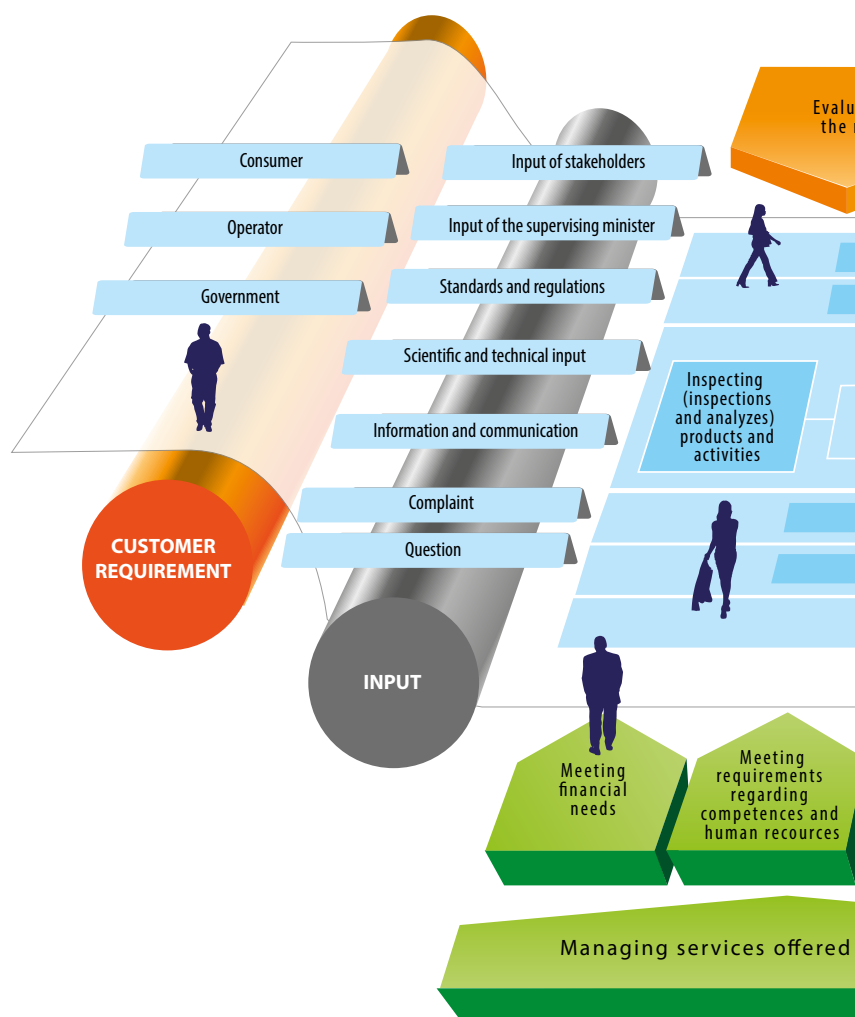
Those considered to be the stakeholders in the BFSA processes are - the sector organizations, the professional organizations, the consumer organizations, citizens, public services, staff members, third countries, the minister in charge of the BFSA, the government, management, subcontractors and suppliers.

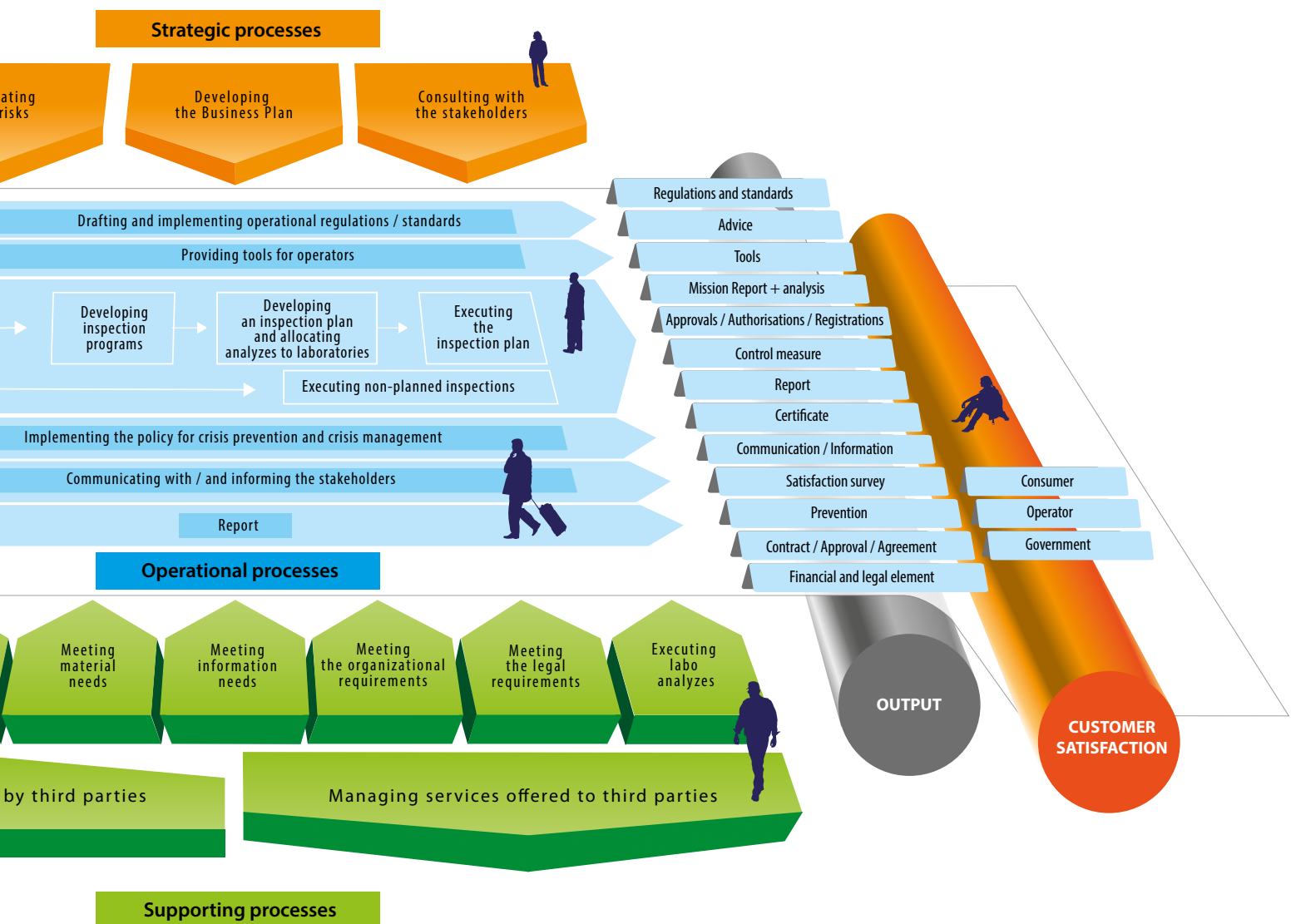
The operational processes are subdivided into six categories so as to meet the needs of the clients - the development and implementation of regulations; the availability of tools for the FFBO's; product and activities' control; the implementation of crisis prevention and crisis management policies; communication/information to the stakeholders and reports to third parties. These are the activities representing the core business of the BFSA. These will generate the different types of products or services (outgoing elements, outputs). These are shown at the right side of the scheme.

The supporting processes provide the necessary resources so as to accomplish the operational activities. Resources are also made available internally via external service providers (suppliers). In parallel to this kind of management, the BFSA also provides services for third parties (e.g. laboratory analyses).

The cartography of the processes emphasizes the efficiency of the activities of the organization, from the BFSA's concern about fulfilling the needs and expectations of the clients, by supplying products and services which meet these needs and expectations.

Cartography of the BFSA





3.4. Staff plan

More than ten years after its initial establishment the BFSA has grown up. The current staff plan is the result of this growth and hereby lets the BFSA fulfill the duties that were entrusted upon it.

The staff plan was not significantly altered in the period between 2012 and 2014. The number of planned FTE declined slightly. From 2015 onward, the BFSA will be confronted with federal government imposed budget cuts which will have a lowering effect on its staff budget.

For the next few years an extrapolation was made of the budget and its influence on the number of people the BFSA can employ. Compared with the year 2014, the BFSA has to lower its staff plan with 97 FTE in 2019. This substantial decrease will result in the fact that unavoidable choices will have to be made regarding certain actions and activities. The BFSA will give priority to the staff members that are essential for the inspections and controls, export and awareness/ training/ vulgarization. This can only be made possible by following an active and dynamic staff policy where there's room for internal shifts.

3.5. Budget and financing

REVENUE (in k€)	2014	2015	2016*	2017*
Service Fees	39.731	38.080	38.080	38.080
Certification	10.549	10.641	10.641	10.641
Approvals	22.028	22.222	22.222	22.222
Audits for validating the SCS	110	111	111	111
Follow-up of non-compliances	393	396	396	396
Residues	2.792	2.817	2.817	2.817
Controls and inspections (conducted at a normal rate) within the meat industry	2.275	1.883	1.883	1.883
BSE	1.584	10	10	10
Annual Payments	24.000	28.000	27.600	27.200
Other income (laboratories, administrative fines...)	5.310	5.280	4.580	4.580
Government endowment	108.129	95.103	93.026	90.950
EU	406	391	391	391
Leasing of laboratory equipment	375	35	0	360
TOTAL	177.951	166.889	163.677	161.561

* Non-indexed estimates compared to 2015

Expenditure (in k€)	2014	2015 initially	2015 after redistribution	2016*	2017*
Staff	98.003	93.987	93.987	92.859	91.745
Operating costs	72.259	63.227	63.558	62.796	62.043
IT	7.490	6.374	6.674	6.594	6.515
Mandate holders	27.600	24.504	26.250	25.935	25.624
External laboratories	18.605	16.406	15.848	15.658	15.470
Communication	1.112	691	1.002	990	978
Crisis prevention and research	4.045	3.285	2.170	2.144	2.119
Other operating costs	13.407	11.967	11.614	11.475	11.337
Investments	3.585	2.890	2.590	2.558	2.888
Impairments (non-recoverable claims)	1.860	1.975	1.975	1.975	1.975
Leasing (laboratory equipment)	353	358	326	358	358
TOTAL	176.060	162.437	162.436	160.546	159.009

* Non-indexed estimates compared to 2015

3.6. Attained results: the barometers

To obtain a global view on the safety of the food chain, the Scientific Committee developed in cooperation with the BFSA a barometer for the safety of the food chain that includes food safety, animal- and plant health (phytosanitary situation).

These barometers can now be used as an instrument to objectively measure the evolution when compared with previous years.

They can be viewed on our website through the following link: <http://www.favv-afsca.fgov.be/scientificcommittee/barometer/>

4. Social, economic and administrative context

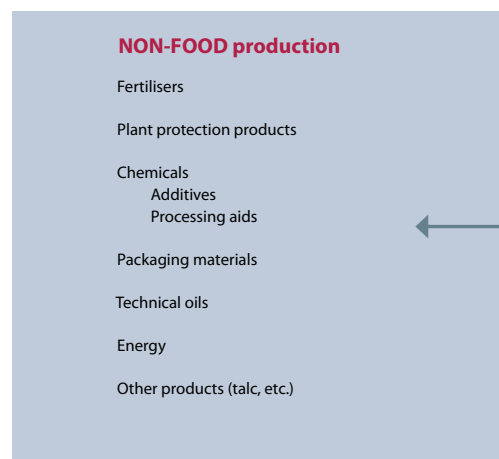
In a constantly changing economic and social context, and in line with previous business plans, the BFSA intends to pursue its dynamic and modern approach. By anticipating – largely through a monitoring programme that is refined each year – and finetuning its reactivity to incidents and external factors, the BFSA plans to adapt to various developments that may have a crucial influence on its working method, whether they are societal, economic, scientific, political or administrative..

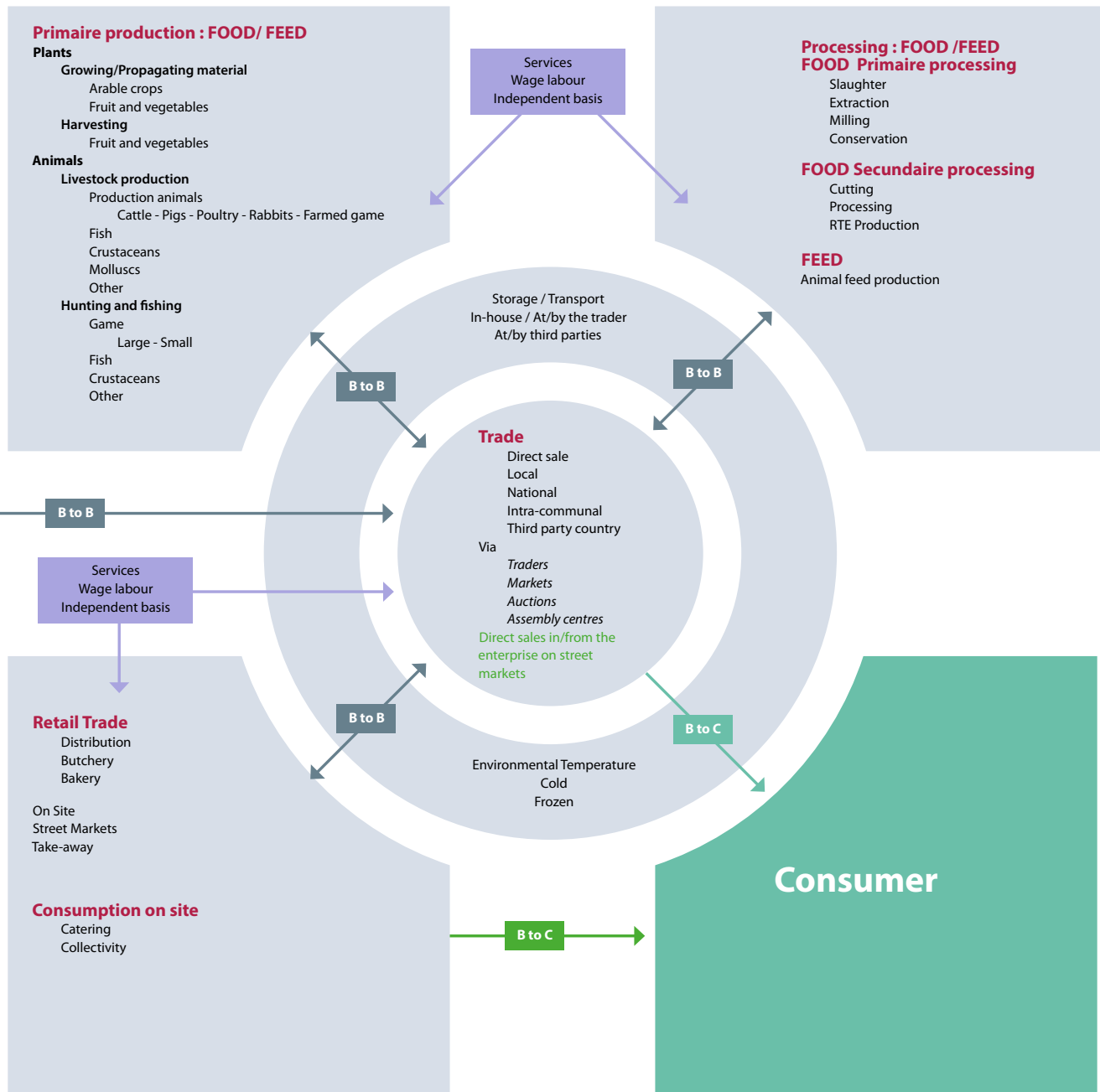
The BFSA will of course give particular weight to consumer issues, to economic events – in order to ensure the most favourable possible framework for Belgian FFBO's and within the European context it is obliged to work in.

4.1. An agency at the heart of a complex food chain

The BFSA presently has to deal with a particularly complex food chain/network (see diagram opposite).

The food sector carries a good deal of weight in Belgium, which owes a significant part of its growth to its export capacity. Naturally the BFSA, which plays a key role in the openness to external markets, must take this into account. Belgium is also a major player in terms of imports and goods in transit.





4.2. European context



In a broader context, the current food safety policy in Europe is the fruit of joint efforts forming part of a global, integrated approach that covers the entire food chain “from farm to fork”. This approach only really emerged at the end of the last century as a reaction to several food scares, the most serious of which was the BSE crisis. The aim was to regain consumer trust in the safety of foodstuffs, based on a harmonised community approach. Consultation and discussions at European level via the General Principles of Food Law in the European Union, Commission Green Paper (1997) and the White Paper on food safety (2000), finally resulted in general food safety legislation (2002). This regulation (regulation (EC) no. 178/2002, also referred to as the General Food Law), lays down the general principles for ensuring the safety of the food chain, without overlooking free circulation within the Community and compliance with international standards, such as Codex Alimentarius.

The General Food Law formed the foundation for a set of complementary legislation such as the food hygiene package and the regulation on official controls. This gave rise to the implementation of a risk analysis approach, incorporating the precautionary principle into the food and feed sector, as well as consumer protection, full transparency, guaranteed traceability and a definition of the basic responsibilities for FFBO's and authorities. FFBO's are responsible for the safety of products. Compliance with regulations by FFBO's must be verified by official controls carried out by the competent authorities. Related and complementary regulations also define requirements, in particular for animal feed hygiene and the microbiological criteria for foodstuffs.



The European Commission decided to review this European regulation and the resulting legal framework, focusing on the adequacy of the food policy that it had been pursuing since 2002. This “fitness check”, as it was called, was outsourced to consultancy firms. The questions posed in this fitness check mainly concerned achievement of the objectives pursued by the regulation, the impact of the regulation on specific or national legislation, and the administrative burden.

In parallel, vertical requirements and standards were specified, including for animal by-products, materials in contact with foodstuffs, additives and particular nutritional uses.

This review by the Commission should result in a number of measures being revised. It is not yet clear what kind of impact this will have and what the possible adjustments could be.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was created as an independent body that provides scientific opinion and scientific and technical support on all matters that have a bearing on food safety. It provides independent information on all such fields and also handles the communication of risk information. It is supported by a network of national risk control bodies.

Notifications and information are sent via the rapid alert system for food and feed (RASFF) to the network of contacts in 28 Member States, the European Commission,, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

The EFSA opinions and the information issued by the RASFF system are both used to steer the BFSA control programme.

Within the Commission, the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) monitors not only the way in which Member States implement and apply the regulation, but also how third countries that export products to the European Union guarantee that their products meet European minimum standards. The FVO devotes some of its resources to fact-finding missions to obtain an overall picture of how the regulation is implemented, as well as in fields that were previously considered to be less important, and to identifying best practices and disseminating them to other Member States.

Consultation between national and European authorities is formalised via permanent working groups (SCoPAFF – Standing Committees on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed), the European Commission groups of experts and Council working groups. There are also informal working groups, presided by the EC, to help Member States to implement legislation via an exchange of experiences through national experts.

In addition to consultations between Chief Veterinary Officers (CVO) and Chief Officers of Plant Health Services (COPHS), there is also consultation between heads of the European food safety agencies. The aim of this consultation is to improve collaboration between agencies to enable them to learn from each other. This was further developed in 2013 and now has a permanent secretariat to ensure continuity. The

EC also recognises the role that this consultation body plays in drawing up a more effective policy. Exchanges of information, experiences and collaboration in maintaining the level of food safety legislation also take place via working groups, meetings and informal seminars of Food Law Enforcement Practitioners (FLEP).

Although European food safety policy has resulted in harmonisation in most fields, it allows a degree of flexibility in a number of aspects. With so much self-employment, SMEs and micro-enterprises, in the future, Belgium will have to ensure they can continue to rely on flexibility and provide them with a suitable environment in which to function.

In 2013, the European Commission proposed an ambitious package of measures to modernise, simplify and strengthen the agri-food chain in other fields in Europe, extending the risk-based approach to sectors that have not yet implemented it: “Smarter rules for safer food”. The aim is to reduce current EU animal health law, plant health law, laws on seeds and propagating material and official controls throughout the agri-food chain, to five regulations (the 5-pack).

The precise impact and scope of the planned regulations is difficult to evaluate because many secondary legislation is expected to emerge through delegated or implementing acts. Moreover, lengthy discussions between the Parliament and the Council will certainly precede the final decision on these legal instruments. Another point that merits attention is the review of the rules on financing official controls and other official activities. It is essential to ensure that the general principle that competent authorities should have sufficient resources to carry out their tasks, still

allows sufficient flexibility for implementation on a national level.

The current policy and the initiatives referred to above must be seen in the context of a Europe that is still in the process of enlargement and which has itself, with Europe 2020, set out five ambitious objectives for employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy. In addition, new technologies are coming into play, the production process is becoming increasingly complex, new trends are emerging within society, such as new eating habits (e.g. eating insects), and food waste is under ever closer scrutiny, without losing sight of food safety – all elements that require the constant development of regulations. Meanwhile, as we will explore in greater detail, consumers continue to count on the authorities to monitor the safety of the food chain and to deal with crises and incidents, such as the EHEC epidemic in Germany (2011). More recently, the economic fraude behind the horse meat scandal (2013) brought food fraud into the European spotlight. Clearly a policy coordinated at European level would have the best chance of success in the future. Implementation of the five-pack should prove particularly useful in this respect.



4.3. Socio-economic context

4.3.1. Consumers and food safety

Consumer concerns over product safety are a major motivating force when the BFSA carries out its tasks. It must also take into account changes in an ageing population, fragmented into smaller, more diversified, more mobile and more connected units. The percentage of people's expenditure on food has remained relatively stable between 2010 and 2012, following a phase during which it fell sharply (-31.1 % between 1978 and 2010 – source: SPF Economie). Consumer habits within this population are also constantly evolving.

In terms of consumption, we note a decrease in the quantity of meat and fats, offset by a rise in the consumption of fruit, vegetables and fish, with growing interest in ecological production, especially in the farm products sectors.

Although it is reassuring to see that consumers feel increasingly concerned by food safety – particularly with regard to hygiene, bacterial contamination and pesticide residues – a survey conducted in 2013 clearly shows that little or nothing is known about the BFSA and its activities.

The BFSA will have to take all these factors into account for the future development of its activities.

4.3.2. Agricultural suppliers

Animal Feed

During recent years, the animal feed sector – represented by the Belgian Compound Feed Industry Association (BEMEFA/APFACA) – has pursued its efforts towards sustainability, which are in constant conflict with the quest for profitability.

BEMEFA/APFACA has been involved from the outset in setting up the Centre of Expertise on Antimicrobial Consumption and Resistance in Animals (AMCRA) and assumes its responsibilities for combating antimicrobial resistance. The target is to reduce the use of medicated feed by 50%. Over the coming years, the sector intends to continue with these efforts, largely by reinforcing synergies with other stakeholders. It will have to take into account the pressure exerted by falling consumer prices for products of animal origin, which is affecting suppliers.

Finally, everything possible will be done to strengthen the position of Belgium as an exporter, mainly through closer collaboration between private enterprise and the administration.

Oils and fats sector

Following a period where the public authorities applied real pressure on the sector to produce biofuels, it now seems that this trend has come under threat. This could seriously imperil the profitability of the sector.

Moreover, because it is lagging behind in terms of GMO permits, Europe could cut itself off from important sources of vegetable oils and fats.

These two factors will no doubt need to be monitored closely in the years to come.

Plant protection products

The use of plant protection products and their potential impact on health and the environment remains a source of grave concern for the general public. Faced with this situation and the need to respond to demand from a growing population, professionals in the sector plan to take a new approach that combines innovation, competitiveness and sustainability, based on a scientific assessment of the risks and benefits. The plant protection industry intends to take into account societal concerns by promoting better practices and working in concert with all stakeholders: health, biodiversity, sustainability and food safety.

4.3.3. Primary Production

In the agricultural sector certain past trends continue:

- reduction in the number of farms (113,883 farms in 1980, 61,926 in 2000, 37,761 in 2013);
- concomitant increase in the average area of farms, in both the north and south of the country;
- very sharp rise in the share of non-family labour; (from 3,9 % in 1980 to more than 20 % in 2013),
- ever-increasing mechanisation;
- constant growth in the biological farming sector (109 farms in 1987, 1,140 in 2010, 1,514 in 2013);
- major growth in short supply circuits.

From an economic standpoint, the share of agriculture in GDP has continued to decline, to 0.6% in 2013 (1.13% in 1980), but this figure must be seen in the context of growth in the agri-food sector. In addition, the share of agriculture in Belgian exports remains relatively high (5.7% in 2013).

In the future, the new CAP (common agricultural policy) 2014–2020, some elements of which have only been in force since 2015, will affect the profitability and structure of the primary sector. Various aspects, such as the percentage of ecologically significant areas to be respected, as well as the different forms of coupling premiums with production (suckler cow premiums, mixed herd premiums, premiums for sheep and goats) are going to redefine the agricultural landscape.

As for export, in addition to the Russian embargo on pig meat for health reasons since early 2014, there has been an economic embargo since July 2014 on a wide range of agri-food products, which will also affect the profitability of farms and industries. It will therefore be more than ever necessary, in partnership with the sectors concerned, to develop agreements giving access to new markets. In parallel, the risks associated with invasive species and emerging diseases need to be taken into consideration and have an impact on import controls.

Free trade treaties under negotiation will also influence agriculture and international trade. For certain products this may mean new outlets, but others may be negatively affected by the differential requirements in terms of animal welfare, health standards and the use of substances banned in Europe; Belgium must without doubt remain vigilant.

Finally, the growing importance of short supply circuits needs to be taken into account by the BFSa in its quest for an acceptable balance between food safety and flexibility.

4.3.4. Food Industry

The food industry – represented by FEVIA – carries considerable weight in the Belgian economy. This sector has resisted the financial crisis well. It represents a total of 226,000 direct and indirect jobs and turnover of €48.2 billion in 2013, up by 1.5% (Source: FEVIA)

The food industry is a diversified and ambitious sector, committed for many years to a safe, reliable and transparent food chain, partly through its efforts to increase the number of validated self-checking systems in establishments in partnership with the BFSa. This sector is constantly on the lookout for

innovation and sustainability, and has the export market resolutely in its sights. This latter aspect is of course of particular importance today, against a background of international political tensions that could have a direct impact on our exports, as the recent embargo imposed by the Russian authorities has proven to be.

With Food2015, the food industry has set itself an ambitious growth target of 6 billion euros for 2015. The Food.be promotion platform has been launched with the slogan “Small country. Great food”. This slogan perfectly reflects what Belgian food represents: quality, diversity and innovation.

FEVIA promotes a healthy lifestyle with balanced nutrition and regular physical activity. With an extremely varied output of foodstuffs, the food industry plans to offer consumers choice with a view to balanced nutrition. Innovation in the food sector will enable it to respond better to consumer needs and expectations, in particular in terms of nutrition. The two centres of competitiveness (WagrALIM and Flanders’ FOOD) provide scientific support for improving the nutritional value of products.

Meat

Despite the decline in meat consumption in Belgium (86.5 kg per inhabitant in 2013 compared with 101.4 in 2004), the meat sector continues to be of primary importance (€6 billion in turnover in 2012), and has a solid positive trade balance (almost €2 billion in 2012).

The leading export markets in Europe are France, Germany and the Netherlands.

The meat sector, in particular the pork sector, has been severely affected by the embargo imposed by the Russian authorities in January 2014.

Fruit and vegetables

The fruit and vegetable sector is another heavyweight, especially in terms of export. Export represented €4.1 billion in 2012, mainly destined for France, the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom. As for third countries, the main outlets for processed potato products are Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Chile, while the United States provides an important market for frozen vegetables (25% of European production of frozen vegetables comes from Belgium).

Belgium is one of the world leaders in the potato industry. It is the world leader for export of potato-based products and the world's biggest importer of fresh potatoes. This gives an idea of the scale of the processing industry in this sector.

This sector was also affected by the embargo imposed by Russia.

Milk and dairy products

With a turnover of €4.4 billion in 2012 and exports worth €2.6 billion, the dairy sector is also a major food industry player. More than half of such exports are destined for France, the Netherlands and Germany. Exports to third countries represent 16.6%.

Exports of drinking milk have seen exceptional growth in recent years. The approval of 20 Belgian dairy companies in 2014 for the exportation of milk and dairy products to China is a very important achievement given the potential of this market. We can therefore expect to see continuing growth in exports of Belgian milk and dairy products to China over the coming years.

Other sectors

Other important sub-sectors are chocolate (€2.5 billion in exports in 2012, with more than 20% to third countries) and beer (€1.1 billion in exports, more than 70% of which went to France, the Netherlands and the United States), as well as water and other drinks.

4.3.5. Distribution

In addition to significant price fluctuations, the distribution sector has had to adapt to a major modification to commercial structures.

Since 2000 we have seen a drastic decline in the number of independent FFBO's (36% of butchers, 30% of fishmongers and 19.5% of grocers have disappeared), partially offset by a spectacular increase in small supermarkets (+ 64% over the same period). Although sales surfaces have reduced slightly in urban centres, they have increased very significantly on the outside of towns with the installation of hypermarkets. Consumers are now making greater use of the internet for online purchases, as well as for price comparisons that put the sector under constant competitive pressure. We are seeing a constant rise in the market share of hard discounters in all sectors, and in particular for fresh meat.

Faced with this situation and the consumer concerns already mentioned, the distribution sector has come up with the following:

People's expectations

- products that are more aligned with the consumer health concerns: lower in salt, fat, sugar and alcohol;
- greater transparency of information, especially on packaging
- packaging more suitable for smaller family units;
- greater diversity and more international products, in particular to meet the needs of certain categories of the population.

Economic constraints

- a smaller number of larger and more professional actors;
- a broader range of products in terms of price, brands and promotion;
- better response to the concentration and diversity of the population;
- raising pressure on the policy to reduce production and labour costs;
- the development of «alternative» points of sale (such as service stations, night shops, e-commerce, home delivery).

Socio-cultural expectations

- a wide range of different products;
- authentic and made-to-measure products;
- adaptation to trends: real food / slow food;
- a growing range of bio and vegetarian products;
- more local offerings.

Sustainability requirements

- safe food products;
- more environmentally friendly products (transparency concerning the environmental footprint);
- products that respect animal welfare (procurement);
- ethically responsible products (fair trade);
- a strong commitment to combating food waste in a country where waste is significantly higher than the European average (according to a study commissioned by the European Commission in 2010. It is difficult to establish the distribution of responsibilities by sector for waste, given that some losses can be considered as inevitable).

Technological challenges

- made-to-measure products;
- more flexible offerings;
- products suitable for modern means of communication and sale.

In conclusion, it appears that today the distribution sector must better satisfy socio-cultural and sustainability expectations, as well as adapting to economic trends: consumers are often prepared to pay more for products that meet their expectations.

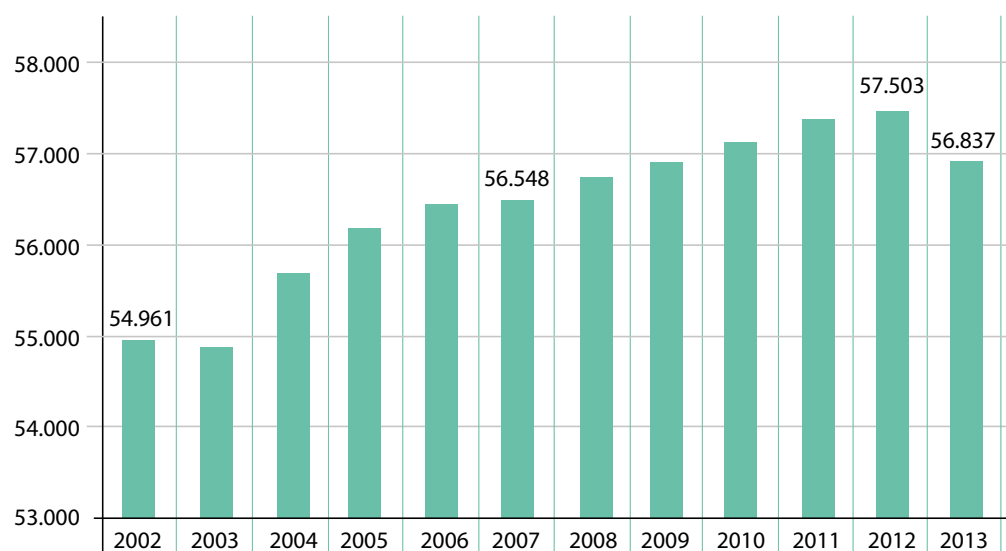
Products must also adapt to consumers that are moving increasingly towards vegetable consumption, increasingly connected and keen to support local trade where it offers a wide range.

4.3.6. Catering

The catering sector counted 56,837 FFBO's in 2013. This figure shows a slight decline in the number of catering enterprises compared to 2012. See the graph below:

Number of catering enterprises in Belgium

Source: Guidea and FOD Economie - Adapted by the BFSa



In parallel, given the economic situation, the sector has seen a large number of bankruptcies. The sector also has a very large number and a wide variety of workers, as well as a high rate of staff turnover.

This is no doubt a feature that should inform the BFSa mission, especially in terms of training workers to comply with good hygiene practices and sanitary standards.

The sector is investing heavily to meet the rising demand. Current trends are towards faster service and more take-away products using vending machines. The sector also plans to develop innovative ranges (cross-business, street food and bistronomy concepts). The sector will also pursue its efforts in the field of healthy economic management.

4.4. Scientific and technological developments

Scientific research underpins the development of new knowledge concerning the dangers and risks in the food chain, the drafting and refinement of standards and the design of new products or processes that form part of the food chain. New or improved diagnostic methods, as well as new methods for the prevention or treatment of diseases, are also emerging from scientific research. Knowledge is growing rapidly at both national and international level. Applying these developments to policy represents a major challenge. The opinions of the Scientific Committee, the Higher Health Council, the BFSA and other foreign agencies are an important source of science-based information. These opinions are therefore closely monitored by BFSA experts.

In the field of disease prevention and control, early detection and identification of emerging diseases remains a huge challenge, both for animals and plants farmed for food. Automated molecular detection, multiplex PCR and next generation sequencing (NGS) techniques will play a very important role, alongside vigilance by all field FFBO's and the application of new biosafety concepts. We expect to gain knowledge on the risks of emerging infectious animal and plant diseases and vectors, as well as the risk of transmission

of zoonotic pathogens and antimicrobial-resistant genes to humans via the food chain. New vaccines (markers) and antivirals are in development and will no doubt be integrated into a pioneering policy on animal diseases.

In the field of microbial food safety, new molecular detection and typing techniques are becoming routine diagnostic methods, allowing faster and more reliable detection of sources of bacterial and viral contamination of foodstuffs. The development of a Belgian and European database of food pathogen molecular profiles is a major step forward in the rapid identification of infection clusters. Suitable detection methods for new strains of emerging microbiological threats, such as the human pathogen *E. coli*, will be developed. Specific visions will have to be developed for the risks associated with new eating habits (such as insect-based foods) and these will have to be incorporated into the policy.

Chemical threat analysis methods are becoming increasingly rapid and accurate. The challenge is to interpret the toxicological and biological relevance of traces of contaminants and residues. Further advances are expected in the development of multi-analyte methods and rapid detection methods for residues and contaminants, which can be used directly in the field. Nanoparticle identification techniques are in full development. These techniques can shed new light on the characteristics of foodstuffs. Sophisticated chemical tests will detect migrant components (endocrine disruptors) from packaging materials, etc. Other toxic metabolites from moulds or other as yet unknown process contaminants will probably be discovered in the food chain.

5. Stakeholders vision

In order to carry out its missions while meeting the expectations of society, the BFSA requests the FPS Personnel and Organization (FPS P&O) and/or a private firm to conduct a survey once every three years, alternating between a consumer perception survey and an FFBO perception survey. The report on these surveys is available on the BFSA web site, www.BFSA.be.

The BFSA has also asked an external consultant

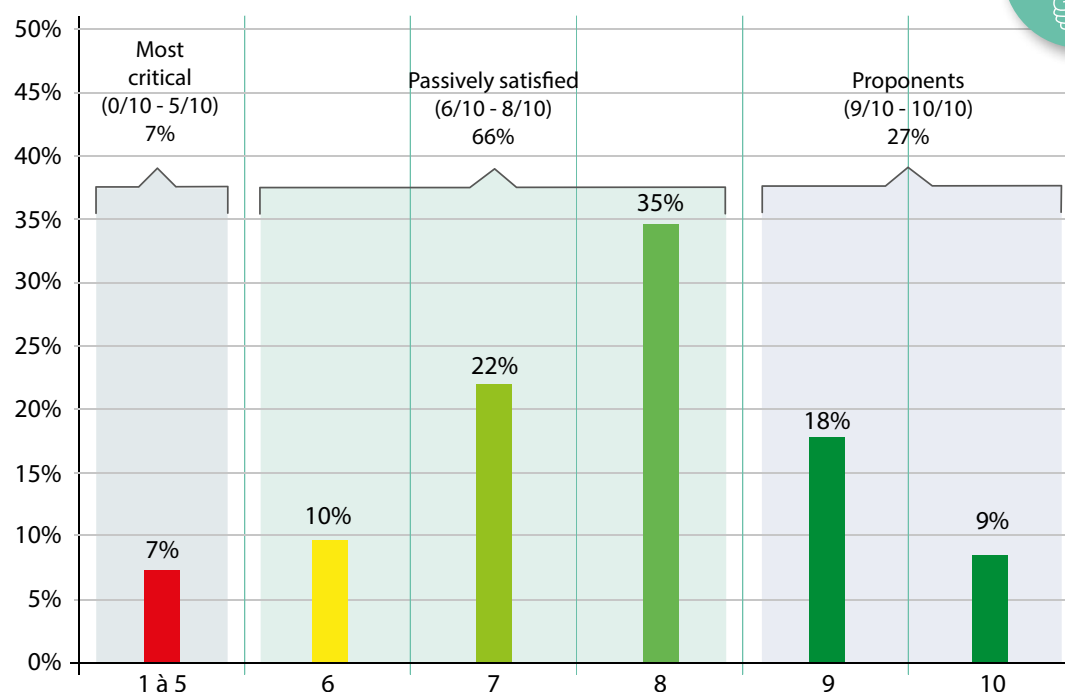
to conduct a SWOT analysis among stakeholders (representatives of agri-food sectors, consumers and partners) in order to define its strategic objectives.

These surveys have shown that the BFSA is becoming increasingly well-known and overall satisfaction scores for the services it provides are high.

5.1. Consumer perception survey

Consumer perception of the BFSA, its role and activities, were assessed in two surveys (in 2010 and 2013), organised partly through a representative panel of the Belgian population, and separately through any person wishing to participate in a survey via the link on the BFSA web site.

93% of consumers stated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the work performed by the BFSA



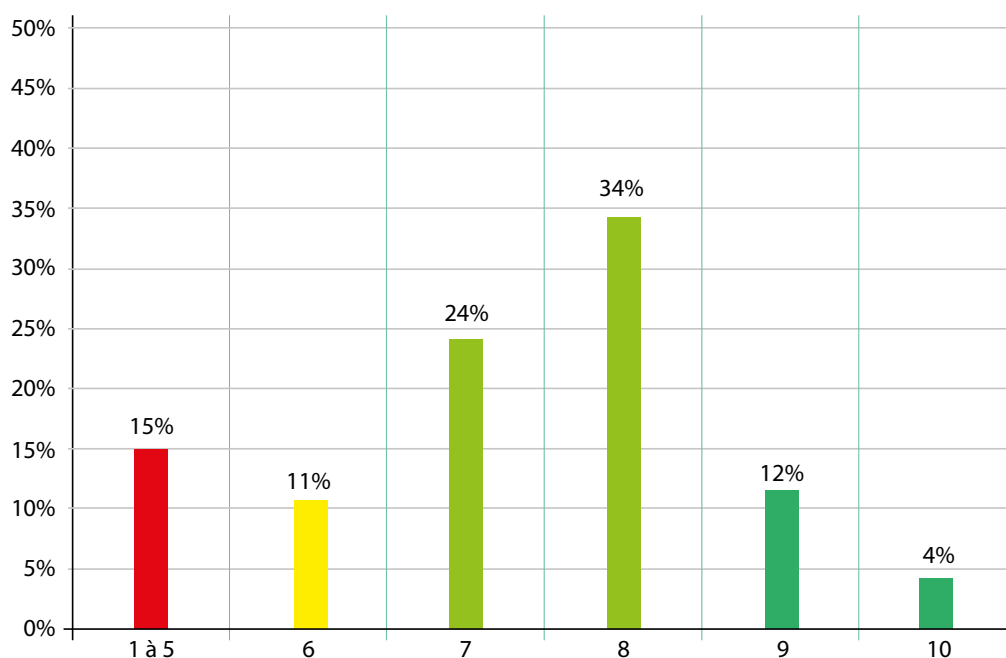
93%



5.2. FFBO perception survey

In early 2013, the SPF P&O, assisted by a private consultancy, was commissioned to carry out a second survey, three years after the first one, on the perception of the BFSA's work among regulated enterprises: 27,910 enterprises operating in different sectors of the food chain were invited to respond anonymously to a questionnaire.

*85% of FFBO's appreciate or appreciate strongly the work of the BFSA,
5% more than during the last survey in 2009.*



Moreover, 94% believe that the BFSA helps to improve the safety of the food chain and the reliability of Belgian products.

For 89% of FFBO's, the inspection report correctly reflects the real situation in their enterprise.

The overall assessment of the work of the BFSA is 8/10, which is high for a control service.

5.3. Qualitative survey among stakeholders

A qualitative survey on the functioning of the BFSa was conducted by Deloitte on behalf of the BFSa among stakeholders, with a view to drawing up a new business plan.

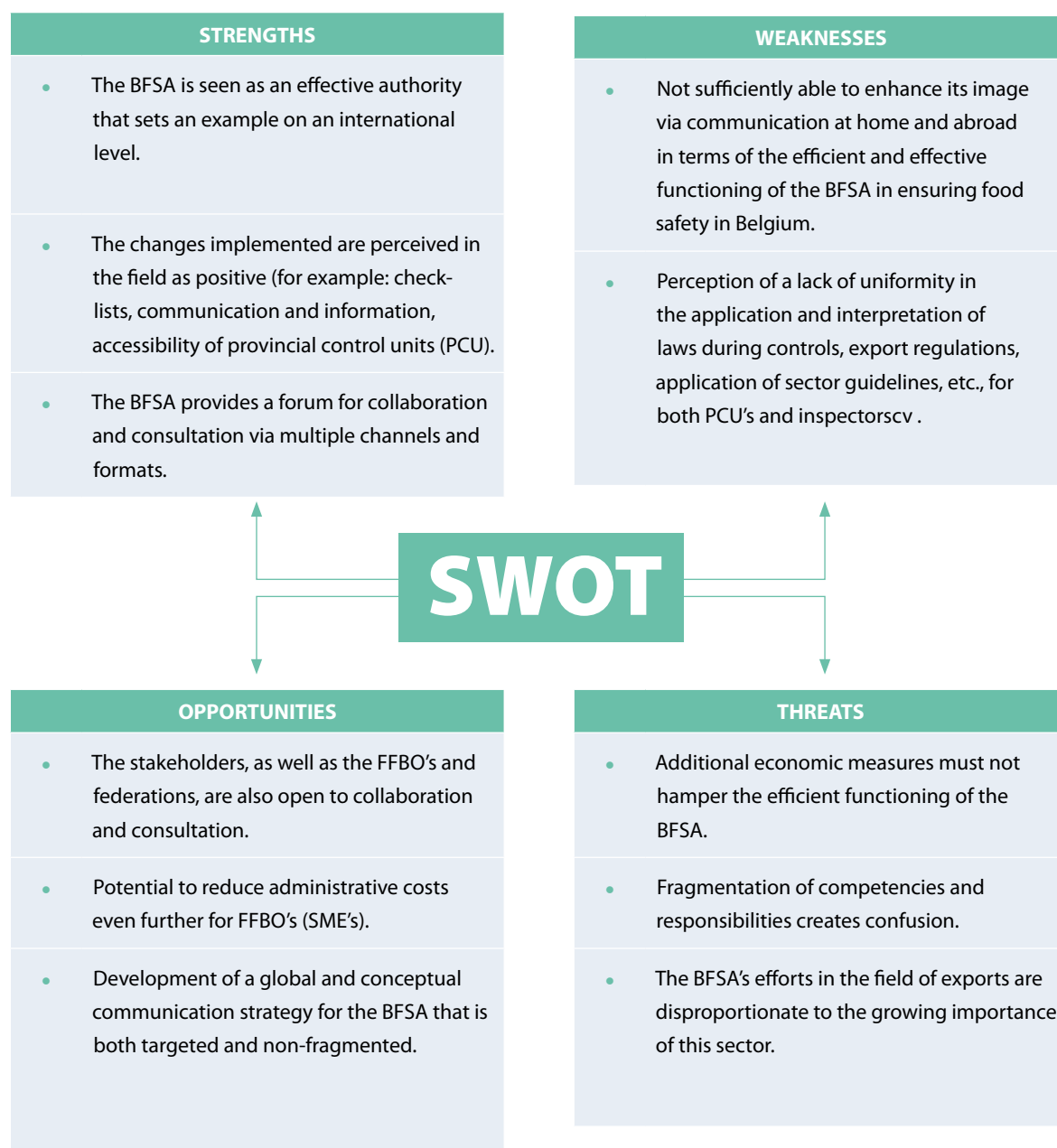
It examined firstly how stakeholders rated its current functioning and met their expectations, and secondly the attitude of stakeholders towards its strategic vision. The survey was carried out between the beginning of June and the end of August 2014.

The survey covered 12 themes: (1) the BFSa, an organisation on the move; (2) responsibility for food safety / distribution of tasks; (3) control policy and programme; (4) controls, inspections and expertise; (5) certificates, exportation, authorisations, etc.; (6) crisis prevention and management; (7) financing; (8) communication; (9) the BFSa and other authorities; (10) the BFSa and the administrative burden; (11) policy, regulation and international relations; and (12) self-checking.

The survey was conducted using an online poll of FFBO's and federations, as well as via two discussion groups with FFBO's and 55 in-depth interviews (23 members of the BFSa consultative committee and 32 FFBO's in the food sector).

5.4. SWOT analysis

Based on the conclusions and recommendations for each theme, the SWOT analysis attempts to provide a consolidated view of the main findings of the survey conducted among stakeholders. This SWOT analysis was based on the interpretations of the interviewers involved in the survey.



6. Strategic and operational objectives 2015-2017

The Belgian legislator has entrusted the BFSa with the ambitious mission of monitoring food chain safety and food quality in order to protect the safety of consumers, animals and plants.

This mission has to be seen within the framework created by the European General Food Law. This places the primary responsibility for the safety of food and feed with businesses, while the government is responsible for monitoring. To be able to assume these responsibilities, businesses have to implement and maintain efficient self-checking systems and the government has to set up an efficient control system.

In the framework of the different operational objectives, the BFSa shall make sure to take into account micro corporations and SMEs, for example by specifically targeting this group in its information policy. The BFSa seeks to engage in constructive consultation with all of its stakeholders.

The BFSa has been given a clear and explicit mandate, but as a government agency it also needs to serve the interest of the general public. This entails that the Agency has to organize its work as efficiently and effectively as possible and make sure that sufficient investments are made in activities that promote well-being and welfare.

The BFSa's actions and functions needed to attain its goals were solidified in successive business plans, each encompassing a three-year period, the last period of which pertained to the period 2012- 2014.

The elaboration of the new business plan coincides with the start of the 5-year term of the new government. Although the business plan only covers a period of 3 years, the strategic objectives can be assumed to apply by and large for the entire duration of the term , insofar as the preconditions remain the same.

The governmental agreement announces a number of initiatives which may have an impact on the functioning of the BFSa, but the scope of which is yet unknown. In this respect, specific references are made to the chapters on modernising public administration and the organization of the federal government. The BFSa will actively participate in these activities and adjust its strategic and operational objectives accordingly.

The budgetary objectives set by the government will have a considerable impact on the functioning of the BFSa. Generally speaking, in 2015, staff credits and working capital will be reduced by 4% and 20% respectively. In the years to come, there will be 2% additional cutbacks on staff credits and working capital. For the BFSa, these budget cuts are calculated pro rata of the government endowment within the total income.

Needless to say, meeting budgetary goals is a general objective for every government organization, which will have to be attained by taking these goals into account for every single strategic objective.

In this respect, the following principles will apply:

- maintaining a maximum number of inspections,
- limiting the reduction of the sampling and analysis programs as much as possible.
- the cutbacks will be increased for other programmes and other activities as their direct relevance to the safety of the food chain decreases.

In addition, a number of events can take place which may necessitate the strategic and operational objectives to be reviewed in the course of the lifetime of the business plan:

- further changes in (financial) resources allocated to the BFSa,
- changes regarding the nature and the scope of the mission,
- restructuring on the level of the federal government,
- changes in the legal framework,
- measures to be taken or to be executed in order to carry out the coalition agreement,
- the necessity to reconsider the activities that are being carried out internally and externally in order to meet the budgetary objectives.

The Business Plan for the period 2015-2017 is centred on 5 strategic themes:

1	2	3	4	5
Monitoring the food chain by means of controls while maintaining an optimal level of food chain safety (View page 43)	An appropriate legislative framework and supporting measures to improve food chain safety	An Agency accepted by food business FFBO's and recognized by society and the consumers in particular, both nationally and internationally	An optimal level of services rendered to companies in the framework of food chain safety and to governments regarding delegated tasks	Optimal organizational management

Within the scope of these strategic themes, strategic objectives are defined first, which are subsequently translated into one or multiple operational objectives. Operational objectives are either projects that have to be carried out within the foreseen time-frame or permanent objectives for which critical process indicators have to be met. For each of these operational objectives specific actions can also be defined, as to enable a phased approach. The planning of the operational objectives has to be evaluated annually and has to be reviewed if necessary.

The one-year planning is the most detailed and binding one, the multi-annual planning only serves as an indication, although its objectives will have to be met by the end of the lifetime of the business plan.

The Business Plan itself is limited to defining the strategic themes and objectives and describing the operational objectives. The detailed elaboration of these objectives will be included in a dashboard, which will be published on the BFSa's website and which will be updated on a regular basis (at least once a year) and which will be explained in the Advisory Committee.

In the run up to, or in the course of the previous business plan, all stakeholders were asked to assess the functioning of the organization and voice their expectations concerning the organization, by means of:

- a consumer survey,
- a survey and a SWOT analysis of FFBO's and members of the Advisory Committee,
- the input of the Scientific Committee,
- a survey of the BFSa's staff on its corporate culture and values.

In addition, the results of the previous years and the policy choices that were made in the new government agreement were also taken into account.

6.1. Theme 1: An efficient organization of food chain monitoring with a view to maximally ensure food chain safety,

6.1.1. Vision

Monitoring the food chain by means of controls remains the BFSA's core mission. In the past, the BFSA has made considerable efforts to translate the broad and vague concept of risk-based checks into concrete inspection and sampling programmes based on objective and statistically substantiated parameters. The inspection programme is a multi-annual programme that is aimed at inspecting all of the FFBO's at a predefined frequency, and to this day, the sampling programme is determined annually based on the most recent data. The inspection frequencies can be adapted throughout the lifetime of the business plan. Like the analysis programme, they are no longer included in the business plan. The starting point is the inspection frequencies as included in the previous business plan. Modifications will be explained in the Advisory Committee and the (modified) inspection programme will be published on the website.

When applying EU regulation regarding food safety, a pragmatic solution will be opted for, providing the legislation proves to be lenient enough.

This approach will be maintained and further refined over the years to come. Additionally, specific actions based on indications and aimed at certain activities or products will also be carried out. For example, certain regulations are not being followed properly (e.g. the use of sulphite in minced meat), new practices (e.g. the consumption of insects) or (re-)emerging dangers.

In addition to the programmed controls, there is a wide array of other control activities that originate from complaints, international alert messages (RASFF), requests for approval and authorization and special actions whether or not in collaboration with other public services, etc.

All of these controls constitute the cornerstone of food chain monitoring. Therefore, the BFSA will on the one hand strive towards maximally maintaining the number of inspections by compensating for cutbacks in staff in other activities and by realizing further efficiency gains. On the other hand, the Agency will try to keep the restrictions regarding the sampling and analysis programme, which are necessary to realize savings, to a minimum and maintain checks on food safety criteria as much as possible. The underpinning of the control programme by means of a scientifically based risk assessment will be examined further in close collaboration with the Scientific Committee.

Monitoring the health of animals and plants remains a core mission for the BFSA. In consultation with the organizations involved, choices will have to be made and priorities will have to be set regarding the different programmes, based on a risk assessment and taking into account the budgetary restrictions.

The global (phyto)sanitary policy has to be updated continuously: the evolution regarding health and newly emerging diseases has to be taken into account. Also when it comes to implementing, a number of initiatives can be taken, in the animal sector in particular, as indicated by the results of the PVS audit.

In this respect, a sufficient amount of attention should go to the veterinarians in the field who play a central role in epidemiological surveillance and are the BFSA's eyes and ears concerning animal health. The policy also has to be aimed at guaranteeing their professionalism, their integrity and their independence in order to maintain high-quality epidemiological monitoring.

For the different programmes, choices will have to be made and priorities will have to be set based on a risk assessment in order to attain the budgetary objectives, all of which needs to be done in consultation with the sector organizations.

The BFSA will have to adjust its fraud policy while taking the budget restrictions into account and it will have to focus its efforts on the most critical types of fraud. The BFSA will continue to participate in interdepartmental initiatives as much as possible.

6.1.2. Strategic and operational objectives

S1.1	The BFSA has an annually updated control programme that is fully executed, complemented by specific actions. Unplanned, but necessary controls are carried out within reasonable terms.
O1.1.1	A scientifically based multi-annual control programme that is reviewed annually, both for the inspections and the analyses, and which is optimized for the entire food chain. In this respect, special attention goes to the control of self-checking systems and a more extensive classification of FFBO's.
O1.1.2	Full implementation of the control programme, adjusted for the budgetary efforts.
O1.1.3	Carrying out of actions outside of the control programme to follow-up on specific problems concerning the activities as well as the products.
O1.1.4	Conducting unplanned controls within legal and/or reasonable and pre-defined terms (treatment of complaints, RASFF-files, approvals and authorizations, certification checks...)
O1.1.5	Efficient import controls which guarantee that the imported products meet the same safety level as EU products, taking into account the increasing globalization and complexity of the food chain, which are adjusted and based on a refined risk assessment.
O1.1.6	Optimal support of the control programme by guaranteeing the quality of the analyses within the shortest possible lead time, at the lowest possible cost and using the most cost-efficient distribution between internal and external analyses.
O1.1.7	Efficient fraud control in the food chain based on a policy that provides specific actions and which is aimed at creating awareness among staff.

S1.2	The monitoring of animal and plant health is organized and based on pre-defined programmes that are part of a global sanitary policy
O1.2.1	Actively participating in the updating of the sanitary policy
O1.2.2	Developing a structured approach for epidemiological surveillance and epidemiological monitoring, including new (emerging) animal and plant diseases, both in domestic and in wild animal species.
O1.2.3	Active participation in programmes with a focus on reducing resistance against antimicrobial and antiparasitic agents.

6.2. Theme 2: An appropriate legislative framework and supporting measures to improve food chain safety

6.2.1. Vision

Controls and inspections are necessary to allow for proper monitoring of the food chain, but are only fully effective if they are embedded in a more general policy and the right legal context, in which supporting measures should allow FFBO's to comply with regulations.

Legislation and regulations can only be efficiently imposed, if they receive widespread public support. The BFSa will continue to implement the consultation model in which all of the stakeholders, FFBO's as well as consumers, are sufficiently involved in developing measures. This is done to guarantee that measures are effective, proportional to the objective to be attained and within the limits defined by the European regulatory framework.

If somewhat possible, an obligation of result shall be favoured over an obligation of means.

The hygiene package is an elaborate collection of prescriptions which have largely proven their usefulness, but which in a number of cases are not fully adapted to the current technological developments. The BFSa will strive, to the best of its abilities, to adjust EU legislation taking into account the latest developments and specific Belgian circumstances. In case European legislation leaves room for a national policy or if exceptional circumstances require a national policy, a careful consideration between different aspects will always have to be made. Taking into account all elements of the precautionary principle, Food Chain Safety will determine the minimal requirements. However, once a sufficient amount of guarantees have been provided, the emphasis will be on the feasibility and the enforceability of the measures, on administrative simplification, on avoiding gold-plating and on supporting FFBO's.

During the negotiations on the EU legislation, the BFSa will strive towards a 'level playing field' for the EU market and will try to avoid excessive legislation. Where warranted, the choice will be made to use national derogations.

Self-checking remains the cornerstone of the policy, based on clear result commitments adjusted to the FFBO's specific situation. Marketing safe food is a clear result commitment, as is implementing an effective HACCP system or taking effective measures in case non compliant products are placed on the market.

In addition to the objectives, the hygiene package also imposes clear obligations of means by providing specific rules that have to be complied with.

Deploying the appropriate resources to meet the result commitments and more specifically the implementation of HACCP-systems is not always easy, especially for smaller businesses. In the timeframe of the current business plan, the guides will remain a very important tool that has to further evolve. The guides should also serve a didactic purpose. For the B2C sector, it will be examined how the requirements can be relaxed, without however compromising the safety level, by emphasizing hygiene prescriptions combined with a further simplified HACCP approach. In addition, complementarity between self-checking guides and privately written guides will have to be strengthened further, so that they constitute a coherent whole with a minimum of red tape.

Certification also remains an important tool to guarantee the correct implementation of the self-checking system.

Food chain FFBO's do not constitute a homogeneous group of businesses. This is not only the case because

they have many different products and productions methods, but also because they show very different behaviour. The BFSa will invest more in a policy that takes into account FFBO segmentation based on their attitude regarding the obligations concerning food chain safety.

In the past, the BFSa has made considerable efforts to communicate with different groups of stakeholders via different channels and offer them a wide array of trainings. Considering the fast evolution and digitalization of the media, a global information strategy has to be elaborated in which measuring the impact of this strategy has to become an instrument to guide the policy.

A well-elaborated and effective traceability between every link of the chain is the only guarantee to be able to quickly intervene in case of food chain incidents without having to resort to draconian measures. This is only possible if businesses have fully developed their internal and external traceability and are able to sufficiently quickly transfer their information to the BFSa. Thorough exercises remain useful, but have to be complemented by agreements on the quick exchange of data geared towards the different sectors.

The BFSa will continue to apply the precautionary principle for incidents in which no full risk assessment is possible and take into account all of the factors and principles that are related to this principle (COM 2000-1).

Food chain safety is a predominantly international affair. Consequently, it is important that the BFSa has an international network at its disposal which makes it possible to exert influence on EU decision making and facilitate export activities.

6.2.2. Strategic and operational objectives

S2.1	The legislation elaborated by the BFSa, or that will be elaborated, will either comply with the following basic principles: legally sound; clear, efficient, proportional to the intended purpose, with a minimum of administrative burden and aimed at attaining the objectives or it will be adjusted to those objectives. The same principles will be defended concerning the Belgian and European legislation the BFSa is contributing to.
O2.1.1	Permanent evaluation of the existing legal framework to meet the principles of the strategic objective.
O2.1.2	The directives will be transposed in due time and where required by the Regulations, the necessary national measures will be provided to complement the EU regulations.
S2.2	FFBO's active in the food chain have all the necessary tools to elaborate a self-checking system that complies with the legislation and have to be able to get this self-checking system validated in a reliable way.
O2.2.1	The tools for implementing the self-checking systems are available. They are aimed at specific needs (both in terms of complexity and in terms of the FFBO type). They are easy to use with a minimum of administrative burden and are actively promoted together with the validation.
O2.2.2	The BFSa guarantees the credibility of validation by the certification organisms.
O2.2.3	Implementing the mandatory validation of the self-checking system for activities that require special attention, such as the production and/or the export of certain groups of foodstuffs, or at the request of the sector organizations.
S2.3	The BFSa has a training and information policy in place that guarantees transparency, provides consumers with the necessary information to safely handle foodstuffs and provides FFBO's with the necessary tools to comply with regulations.
O2.3.1	Integration of the communication by means of diverse media in a global strategy with measurable objectives.
O2.3.2	A differentiated training and information package aimed at different target groups with special attention for starters as well as FFBO's that need coaching is available. The training and information is provided in consultation with other authorities and sector organizations involved.

S2.4	The BFSA is sufficiently prepared to manage incidents and crises.	
	O2.4.1	The BFSA has a policy aimed at preventing incidents and crises as much as possible by efficiently capturing signals that provide indications on the possible occurrence of certain dangers.
	O2.4.2	The BFSA has up-to-date crisis scenarios, a structure to manage incidents and crises and tests the readiness of both the organization and the FFBO's by regularly organizing exercises.
	O2.4.3	The BFSA is an active partner in improving the management of food-borne outbreaks.
S2.5	The BFSA has an extensive international network that allows for support of the Belgian policy on an international level.	
	O2.5.1	Maintain and, where possible, expand the network in the EU in the framework of the HoA, CVO, CPHS, SCOPAFF and within the Codex Alimentarius.

6.3. Theme 3: An agency accepted by FFBO's and recognized by society and the consumers in particular, both nationally and internationally

6.3.1. Vision

The consumer remains at the centre of the BFSA's policy. The control programmes are aimed at keeping the risks for consumers to a minimum in the stage that precedes the purchase. Once the consumer has taken possession of the food, he or she takes on a part of the responsibility. It is important that the consumer has been informed on and has been made aware of all aspects concerning food safety. As of 2015, in addition to regular information, the consumer will also have access to the results of the controls in application of the rules concerning official government.

Societal evolutions can also have an effect on the policy pursued by the BFSA. The choice to reduce the waste of food has for example led the BFSA to introduce a number of relaxations for charity organizations. Future choices concerning the date of minimum durability and the use-by date may call for a new adjustment. The consumption of insects is another example. The BFSA closely monitors these evolutions and will continue to respond to them.

A well-devised consultation with all of the stakeholders is essential to develop a policy that is accepted by society.

The Advisory Committee will continue to play its central role for all of its transversal subjects. Specific problems will be treated in the working groups of the Advisory Committee or in the sector-specific consultation. Companies and consumers will be equally involved in this consultation.

The BFSA's Scientific Committee is an independent organ that is responsible for carrying out the risk assessment to the benefit of the BFSA as well as other authorities. This independence has to guarantee an impartial risk assessment and prevent interference between risk management and risk assessment. This does not mean that there shouldn't be room for a constructive dialogue between the Scientific Committee, the BFSA and the stakeholders. In a number of instances, this dialogue can be used to obtain a final advice, so that the Scientific Committee can get all the relevant information that is necessary to properly substantiate their advices;

Openness and transparency are critical success factors for the policy to be accepted. In addition to detailed information on the website, the publication of the inspection results will undoubtedly contribute to creating awareness among FFBO's as well as consumers. The point of contact for consumers will be maintained. FFBO's also have to be given the opportunity to address their complaints to an independent mediation service. Such a service already exists at the BFSA, but if the mediation service were better known and more widely used by the FFBO's, this would only benefit the acceptability of the BFSA.

In addition to conducting controls, the elaboration of a policy aimed at prevention, creating awareness and information is the second most important cornerstone of the BFSA's activities. The communication channels used to this end will be chosen based on the evolution of their use by citizens and businesses. If the current trend persists, the importance of printed documents will decrease in favour of social media communications and the use of smart phones/tablets.

As a country that is active in export, it is important that the BFSA's accomplishments and its reliability/trustworthiness garner a sufficient amount of international attention/visibility. Not only has the elaboration of an international network, but also the visibility and the quality of the Belgian products have to remain a permanent point of attention. This not only goes for the countries that import our products, but also for development countries that use the Belgian model as an example.

In the framework of the agreements between the BFSA and the BTC, the BFSA will also continue the collaboration concerning the sanitary and phytosanitary quality of the agricultural food products in third party countries.

6.3.2. Strategic and operational objectives

S3.1	The consultation of the stakeholders is structured and systematic
O3.1.1	Permanent consultation in the Advisory Committee and consultation during sector meetings.
O3.1.2	Regular surveys of consumers, FFBO's and staff on their assessment of the functioning of the BFSA and on the expectations of the stakeholders.
O3.1.3	Veterinary practitioners have to be consulted on a regular basis regarding policy choices and assigned tasks.
O3.1.4	The different initiatives regarding administrative simplification are monitored and reported on by the central administration.
S3.2	The BFSA has a well-functioning Scientific Committee
O3.2.1	The Scientific Committee has the necessary means at its disposal to ensure the impartiality of its advices.
S3.3	Handling complaints efficiently
O3.3.1	The BFSA has a client-oriented consumer contact point and efficient procedures in place to ensure that complaints are processed within reasonable terms and that feedback is provided.
O3.3.2	FFBO complaints are handled with, using a clearly communicated and uniform procedure either by or under the supervision of an independent internal mediation service of the BFSA.
S3.4	A transparent and visible BFSA
O3.4.1	The BFSA provides general information on its activities in a user-friendly way, in which a website that is complete as possible plays a pivotal role, supported by other media. The Agency also communicates by means of specific actions aimed at special target groups.
O3.4.2	Timely executed mandatory reporting, transparent global reporting by means of annual reports, the food chain safety barometers and the publication of the inspection results
O3.4.3	The BFSA makes its knowledge and good practices available to other like-minded organizations, within the EU as well as in third party countries.

S3.5	Equitable financing of the BFSA
O3.5.1	Contributions and fees are calculated based on publicly available, up-to-date and objective parameters that guarantee a fair spreading of the costs between all controlled sectors and takes into account the validation of self-checking systems regarding contributions.
O3.5.2	The BFSA uses an efficient system for the collection of contributions, fees and administrative fines.

6.4. Theme 4: An optimal level of services rendered to businesses in the framework of food chain safety and to governments concerning the delegation of tasks

6.4.1. Vision

Among its tasks, the BFSA has a number of missions that are of a dual nature. On the one hand, these assignments are aimed at monitoring product safety, but on the other hand they also provide a service, since they are carried out at the FFBO's request and thus constitute a 'condition sine qua non' to market products both within a unified European market as well as in third party countries. The inspection of all slaughter animals, the monitoring of products of animal origin, the controls on products that enter the European Union as well as the certification of exported goods are a part of the BFSA's tasks and have to be maintained. An optimal division of work between FFBO's and the BFSA has to guarantee the combination of an optimal protection of food chain safety with an efficient functioning.

As Belgium is an important country for the export of food, the BFSA is responsible for the sanitary and phytosanitary aspects. The BFSA will continue to consolidate its past efforts, but this approach can only be successful by means of an optimal collaboration with other policy levels. In addition to the (phyto) sanitary aspects, all of the economic conditions also have to be met. It also has to be taken into account that the BFSA, unlike Belgium's neighbouring countries, cannot call upon permanent representatives in sanitary and phytosanitary matters in third party countries.

In addition to export activities, controls at import are also an important part of its tasks. The dual nature also applies here: on the one hand the safety of the imported products has to be checked so that the safety level is comparable to that of other European

products and on the other hand this activity also has to be supported by controls that are as efficient as possible at rates that cover the expenses. On the European level, it has to be guaranteed that unfair competition is made impossible by a minimum of harmonization.

6.4.2. Strategic and operational objectives

S4.1	Service provision to FFBO's is organized efficiently and where possible by means of digital tools
O4.1.1.	FFBO's can submit their most important requests and consult and update their data via FOODWEB, including BECERT. Services are rendered efficiently via the PCU.
O4.1.2	Regarding inspections, the modernization initiated on the EU-level is implemented and the company-assisted inspection is being further elaborated.
O4.1.3	The activities of the calibration laboratory of DG Laboratories are made available to both internal and external clients.
S4.2	Export and import are actively supported as a part of the BFSA's competences
O4.2.1	New export markets are being explored, in collaboration with all of the stakeholders and authorities involved, and tapped into when deemed useful
O4.2.2	The BFSA supports the preservation and further development of goods flows via Belgian points of entry
S4.3	The BFSA carries out the tasks it has been delegated following the agreed-upon modalities
O4.3.1	The BFSA integrates the tasks relating to the controls it has been entrusted with or relating to shared competences in its control programme, based on a control policy and a control programme that is determined by mutual agreement.
O4.3.2	The BFSA guarantees an efficient management of the Animal and Plant health Funds based on a protocol with the competent authority.

6.5. Theme 5: Optimal organizational management

6.5.1. Vision

The mission of a public service institution can only be carried out, insofar as the organization can operate efficiently. The 5th theme is aimed at providing the organization with all of the means to function as a modern institution. The HR policy is aimed at hiring competent staff. Collaborators have to be equipped with appropriate and modern tools. The BFSa has chosen to introduce a quality management system on all levels and has a fully-fledged internal audit system and a system for internal control at its disposal.

In the past, special attention was granted to the development of the IT tools. The important efforts of the past will enable the transition into an almost completely digital organization in the years to come, which will benefit the consumers as well as the FFBO's. Consumers will, for example, benefit from the transparency made possible by publishing the inspection results, the FFBO's will, for example, benefit from an as complete as possible digital management of their files.

Finally, the business plan also puts plenty of emphasis on the values of the BFSa which were defined in collaboration with the BFSa's collaborators.

For a number of tasks (analyses, inspection, certification, organization of identification and registration systems in the animal sector, ...) included in the 5 themes, the BFSa completely or partially calls upon other organizations or independents, either by delegating or outsourcing tasks. This will continue to be the case in the future, but the BFSa will strive towards a(n) (cost)efficient division of tasks to be carried out internally and those that are to be delegated/outsourced.

These partners remain an important asset for the BFSa to successfully perform its tasks. All measures will be discussed with these partners, as is the case for all stakeholders. Since the majority of the operating budget has to be spent on these activities, the savings to be realized will undoubtedly have an important impact.

The principles mentioned in the general part will also be applied here. In addition, it has to be made sure that the tasks, which are fully financed by the fees for the performances carried out, and which are often necessary for the economic survival of any company and provide a guarantee for public health, continue to be guaranteed. If necessary, the budget has to be adjusted, certainly if the BFSa has to perform more tasks.

In clear-cut cases, partnerships with certain stakeholders may be installed, without however compromising the impartiality and the objectives of the BFSa. This was already the case in the past by, for example, taking into account sectoral sampling plans, promoting the guides, or tapping into export markets. In order to guarantee transparency and impartiality, such joint ventures will be documented and submitted to the Advisory Committee.

The efficiency of the operational services is for a large part determined by the supporting services. This theme covers a lot of essential tasks the BFSa cannot function without, but only the main points of which are included in the strategic and operational objectives.

In order to attain these objectives, a lot of actions need to be carried out, the detailed description of which is beyond the scope of this business plan, and which are recorded in specific dashboards, such as:

-
- the execution of the staffing plan, the training plan and the execution of the evaluation cycles,
-
- generating income and expenditure which are monitored closely by the supervisory authorities,
-
- the execution of the IT programme
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6.5.2. Strategic and operational objectives

S5.1	A staffing policy aimed at maintaining a competent and motivated workforce
O5.1.1	The staffing plan is executed to its fullest extent, with corrections for budgetary measures.
O5.1.2	The BFSA has motivated, satisfied, protected and qualified collaborators who have evolved along with the new requirements and implements a high-quality evaluation system.
S5.2	The quality and the efficiency of the work is a permanent concern
O5.2.1	The quality is guaranteed by means of certified quality systems with a focus on continuous improvement, an efficient organization and a fully-developed risk management.
O5.2.2	Internal control guarantees compliance with administrative legislation.
O5.2.3	The work organization, the internal procedures and the instructions are assessed and if necessary reviewed in order to be simplified or optimized and are integrated into a global transversal process model.
O5.2.4	The collaboration with other authorities has been formalized in a protocol and is supported by regular consultation between the policy makers
S5.3	The collaborators have all the necessary tools to carry out their assignments
O5.3.1	The equipment, the services used and the housing complies with the minimal quality requirements and are made available in a cost-efficient manner. In this respect, special attention goes to creating synergies with other authorities.
O5.3.2	The IT systems are developed based on a coherent and uniform strategy and are based on the organization's needs
O5.3.3	The data warehouse and the analytical accounting of the BFSA are being developed into instruments that transform data into useful information and this way support both the internal functioning and the reporting of the BFSA. This way quality monitoring of essential data is guaranteed.
S5.4	The delegation of tasks and the deployment of third parties is organized in a cost-efficient manner
O5.4.1.	The delegation/outsourcing of tasks to third parties is organized in a cost-efficient and objective manner.
O5.4.2.	Notwithstanding its responsibility for the safety of the food chain, the BFSA will participate in initiatives of third parties that are geared towards ensuring the safety and quality of products, insofar as the necessary means are available.

7. Abbreviations

B2C sector:	FFBO's who have direct contact with the consumer
BPR:	Business Process Reengineering
BFSA:	Belgian Food Safety Agency
COPHS:	Chief Officer of Plant Health Services
COMM:	European Commission
CVO:	Chief Veterinary Officer
DG:	Directorate-general (administration)
EU:	European Union
FFBO:	Food and Feed Business Operators
FTE:	Full Time Equivalent
FVO:	Food and Veterinary Office (Food and Veterinary Office of the European Union)
HoA:	Heads of Agencies
MANCP:	Multi Annual National Control Plan
OIE:	World Organisation for Animal Health
PVS:	assessment tool for the Performance of Veterinary Services by the OIE (Tool PVS: Performance of Veterinary Services)
SCoPAFF:	Standing Committees on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed
WHO:	World Health Organisation
RASFF:	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed.

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