


# The National Food Crime Unit: Will new powers make a difference to tackling food fraud?

01 July 2025  Rachel Lyne

The Food Standards Agency's National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) now has access to powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) which are hoped will assist the Unit in dealing with food fraud in England and Wales.

## Background and public consultation

This comes after public consultations in 2022 and 2023 which proposed enhanced investigatory powers for the NFCU. These consultations demonstrated support for the proposals provided appropriate safeguards were in place to govern the use of the new powers.

## Enhanced investigatory powers

Since 1st May, the NFCU has the power to apply for and execute search warrants, seize evidence, and interview suspects in custody, which in turn means that investigations can be progressed more efficiently. NFCU investigators will now be able to respond swiftly to intelligence and work closely with Police and Local Authorities to tackle the issue of food fraud. Having the ability to enter and search premises following the arrest of food fraud suspects will mean that investigators are much more likely to be able to obtain incriminating evidence before it can be disposed of, which will undoubtedly assist in prosecutions and support the integrity of the food supply chain.

## Expected impact

It is hoped that a more effective NFCU will improve consumer confidence in the safety and authenticity of food and protect legitimate businesses and consumers.

Experts say that the risk of food fraud in the UK is high, despite the work done by businesses and the government following the 2013 horsemeat scandal (which was the catalyst for the establishment of the NFCU).

## Future prospects and challenges

Only time will tell whether these enhanced investigation powers will provide more effective controls and deterrents to the issue of food fraud.

The NFCU has not been as effective as [food and drink](#) business might have hoped and that was caused, in part, by the need for the NFCU to bring in support from the already stretched resources of the Police to investigate the fraud.

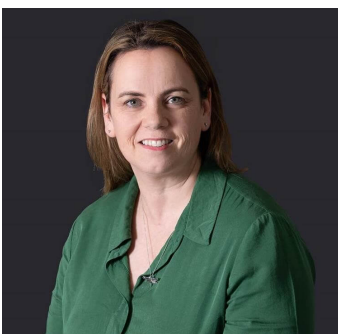
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