

A2.2 Policy goal: Food safety

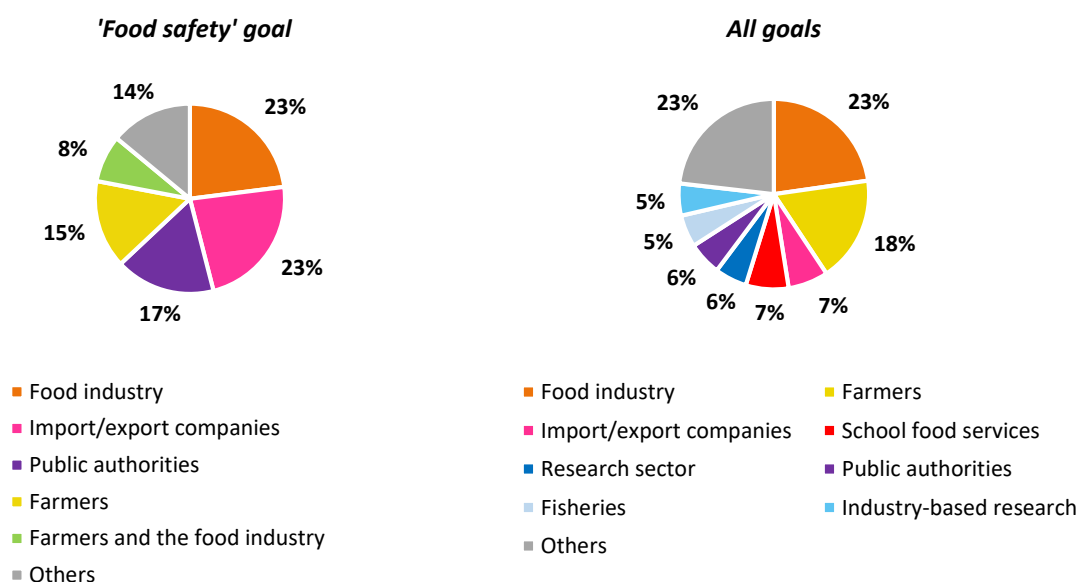
Food safety describes the impact of food on human health, and refers to “*all those hazards, whether chronic or acute, that may make food injurious to the health of consumer*” (FAO/WHO, 2003).

The European Commission’s guiding principle is to apply an integrated approach **from farm to fork** able to cover all sectors of the food chain and different types of actors. Accordingly, food safety policies aim at protecting consumers from **foodborne diseases** that can arise from food contamination during its production, processing, storage, transport, distribution and consumption, by setting appropriate standards and controls. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that food safety policies not only focus on the protection of **human health**, but also on the health status and intra-Community trade of **animals** and animal products, as well as on **plants**’ phytosanitary and quality standards.

All mapped food safety policies recognise the final players of the food chain, **consumers**, as their ultimate beneficiaries. Not only do consumers play the passive role of benefitting from the consumption of safe food, but they are also urged to effectively **protect** themselves against foodborne diseases in both food choice, storage and preparation in **their domestic environment**.

A food safety incident affects all firms (or farms) within the concerned sector, including those employing good safety practices. Is there a need for policies aimed at safeguarding/rewarding virtuous industries in a sector against moral hazard from less virtuous competitors?

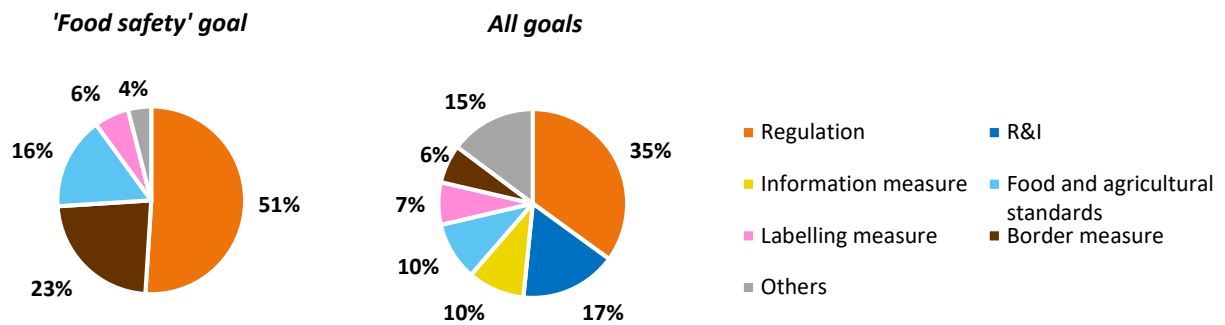
Proportion of mapped food safety policies by PRIMARY TARGET



The pie chart shows that good part of the food chain’s actors is covered by food safety policies, from the food industry and import/export companies to public authorities and farmers. However, from planting to consumption, there are many opportunities for food contamination.

*Should more emphasis be placed on **consumers**’ role in ensuring food safety in the final stages of the food chain (home storage, home cooking, school consumption)?*

Proportion of mapped food safety policies by INSTRUMENT



Regulations, border measures and food standards are the main policy instruments used to help food businesses to produce safe food (90%).

*Being consumers the ultimate beneficiaries, should investments in **education and information measures** be fostered to ensure consumers' food-handling behavioural change towards the prevention of foodborne illness?*

Can labelling measures be improved as a mean to inform consumers?

Outside EU research frameworks, **national R&I** interventions aimed at promoting food safety do not seem widely employed. *Is there a need to promote them?*