

Food Fraud Forecast: Vulnerable with a Chance of Recalls

Hesrie Steyn

Food and Allergy Consulting and Testing Services - FACTS, Cape Town, South Africa

Abstract

Risks that emerge due to food fraud create the perfect storm for product recalls, making it imperative to manage these risks to protect your consumers and brand.

Many products have been recalled in the past. A well-known example is the infamous 'horsemeat scandal', which cost the food industry millions; and in South Africa, thousands of rice products were recalled because of a fraud case involving illegal colourants.

Food fraud is a moving target, and an ever-evolving threat to food supply chains. And it carries high relevance, given that it is a requirement of all major food safety standards to address and manage food fraud.

With crippling economic pressures and climate issues on the rise, the food industry should be considering what the next fraud incident may cost and taking proactive steps to avoid it.

Although there is no crystal ball that can anticipate future food fraud occurrences, there are practical measures that the industry can take to forecast potential vulnerabilities in their supply chain.

This is done by reviewing past incidents and their driving factors, combined with developing an awareness and understanding of the changing food environment.

Valuable commodities such as alcohol, seafood, spices and honey have a history of being vulnerable and susceptible to fraud; but consumer diet movements and product innovations, such as those affecting alternative proteins, provide great opportunities for fraud in the future. Harnessing the information gleaned through incident scanning and horizon scanning can make the food industry more prepared, and ensure it is well protected in the event of the next fraud storm.

Moreover, it has been illustrated that informed preventive measures lead to product recalls being avoided. Turning fraud surveillance into purposeful detection through testing is key in the management of food fraud.

This presentation will share a snapshot of the currently expected fraud trends and discuss how to turn highly technical information into easy-to-implement strategies for food businesses and industry professionals. Case studies, practical examples, and guidance on predicting and preventing food fraud and gaining an understanding of the food fraud environment will be presented in this review.

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY: HESRIE STEYN

Hesrie is a qualified Food Scientist with expertise in food fraud prevention, food authenticity and food testing. She is part of the FACTS (Food and Allergy Consulting and Testing Services) team, where she heads up the Food Fraud and Authenticity division. Through her work with food manufacturers, suppliers, and industry-leading international organizations, she has provided practical support in managing VACCP systems and preventing food fraud. Her experience has allowed for an in-depth understanding of supply chain management, regulatory compliance, analytical techniques and food safety management requirements. Hesrie's involvement in the food fraud field has fuelled her commitment to food safety and security; and provides her with the unique position to offer integrated, comprehensive and practical solutions to challenges faced in the South African food industry.