

FOOD AUTHENTICITY TESTING, INSPECTIONS & AUDITS

SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT AGAINST FOOD FRAUD

The estimated annual cost of fraud to the UK food industry is around £12bn (NFU Mutual, 2019). Many commodities are the subject of fraudulent practice but premium products (higher grade olive oils, herbs and spices, specialist meats and tea / coffee) are at greatest risk, given the economic drivers of food crime.

Intertek carries out audits and inspections against a number of globally recognised standards including BRCGS, FSSC 22000, Global G.A.P, IFS, SQF, RSPO.



Never before has health, safety and wellbeing been so vital to every aspect of our lives. Intertek Protek is the world's first health, safety and wellbeing assurance programme for people, workplaces and public spaces. The programme provides support across all sectors, from manufacturing to retail sites to public places; turnkey solutions covering all aspects from facility health assessment, programme development, audit solutions for the prevention of the spread of infection, cleaning and disinfecting process oversight, post cleaning verification to compliance reporting and certification.

Ensuring the provenance and safety of the food consumers eat each day is an essential aspect of maintaining health and safety standards for all members of the public.

Food Authenticity: A major challenge for the UK Food industry

Food fraud can be conducted in a number of ways. Products can be substituted with an

inferior variety, they can be adulterated or bulked out with other, cheaper ingredients, or they can be deliberately mislabelled or misrepresented by claiming qualities, origins or benefits that are false. Additionally, fraud can take the form of deliberate falsification of records (veterinary approval, crop spraying, product durability dates, etc).

Examples of adulteration / substitution include:

- Chilli powder bulked out with peanut husks – not only defrauding the customer but putting those with a peanut allergy at risk
- Oregano adulterated with olive/myrtle leaves
- Adulteration of palm oil with cheaper oils and sudan IV dye
- Tea leaves bulked out with spent material and dyed sawdust
- Honey diluted with sugar or corn syrup
- Asian Catfish sold as cod

As the ways in which fraud can be committed are very different, the methods of protecting businesses against it are equally so. For each stage of the food supply process there are specific risks that must be assessed and controlled.

The primary controls of food fraud risk

One of the primary controls of fraud risk is to ensure that there is visibility of the supply chain. This requires inspections or audits of supplier sites against approved standards to demonstrate that the level of control and record-keeping at each site is adequate. Suppliers should also be performing some due diligence testing to support the effectiveness of the onsite procedures.

A risk assessment is carried out based on:

- The commodity/ingredient matrix
- The level of visibility of controls available
- The country of origin



- Historical or emerging issues related to the origin or nature of the product
- Legislation in place in the intended market

Suitable and sufficient testing may then be assigned as part of a due diligence programme. Where there is less visibility of the whole supply chain, the level of testing may be increased based on the risk assessment principles above. Companies working with products or commodities which are at higher risk of fraudulent practice want to have confidence in the provenance of the goods they purchase. They also want to protect the brand integrity of their business by ensuring that the product as sold to the consumer is safe and of the quality expected.

Current issues in Food Authenticity

Authenticity really took centre-stage in due diligence testing following the horsemeat issue in early 2013. Following this, retailers drove a sea change in how testing was focussed and switched from supporting basic nutritional label claims to proving the provenance and quality of their products. To date, the problem has not been fully resolved and food crime continues to adapt to circumvent the controls, with current issues persisting in meat, honey, herbs and spices, fish and shellfish, olive and palm oil, rice and wine.

How Intertek services protect Food Authenticity

Intertek has a presence in over 100 countries and carries out audits and inspections against a number of globally recognised standards including BRCGS, FSSC 22000, Global G.A.P, IFS, SQF. In many cases this gives Intertek the advantage of having a local representative who knows the market and issues, and who can carry out inspections and supplier audits to ensure compliance. For manufacturers in the UK, many of whom do not have the budget or expertise to perform audits globally, this provides confidence that their suppliers are working to recognised international standards with defined controls in place.

Intertek has recognised experts in food legislation who can advise on the level and nature of testing required. They can also liaise with technical colleagues worldwide to ensure that the techniques applied are suitable to the product under test and give results of genuine value. The global food testing portfolio includes specific analysis related to food authenticity on at-risk products including meat, fruit juice, honey, botanical ingredients and olive oil.

Intertek is also establishing a partnership with FERA Limited in relation to their Horizon Scan system. The Horizon Scan system collates data on food-related issues across 188 countries. It uses news stories, research, food alerts from local enforcement and

updates from legislative bodies. Intertek has established a system which can then produce reports by country, region, commodity type or the nature of the issue to give an overall picture of the scale of any specific food concern. This allows for advance warnings to be given to customers if there is an issue related to an ingredient or commodity they routinely use.

Solutions for a changing world

Based on Intertek's unique approach to total quality, our Protek suite of operational solutions provides your employees and customers with the confidence that their health, safety and wellbeing is your priority. Contact our experts today to discuss how Intertek Protek can support the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone in your organisation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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