

HM Government

## Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

# Note of meeting with Food and Drink Federation (FDF)

**Location:** FDF HQ, 6 Catherine St, London

**Date:** 10 July 2013

**Attendees:**

Melanie Leech - Chief Executive - FDF

Barbara Gallani - Director of Food Safety and Science - FDF

Professor Chris Elliott – Independent Reviewer – Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

Mary Newman – Secretary - Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

Nick Hughes – Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

NB - Comments belong to FDF unless stated

## 1. Short supply chains

In response to a question about whether shortening supply chains is desirable from an authenticity point of view, Chris Elliott answered that if we can produce food locally that can only be a good thing because it might be harder to source on global markets in the years ahead. The fewer steps in the chain the less likely there is to be fraud because there's less opportunity.

FDF responded that the length of the supply chain does not necessarily correlate with risk of fraud. You can have a long chain that is international and very robust and a short chain where there is fraud taking place.

## 2. Risk identification and assessment

The FDF does not operate a risk matrix as a trade association because risks are very specific to individual businesses. The important thing is to have a system in place to identify fraud. Price analysis is one tool that can be used to identify risks.

The FDF has been working closely with FSA on emerging risks. A lot of it comes down to intelligent analysis of the information rather than simply having a lot of information available. All stakeholders have to work collaboratively so we can get better at analysing trends and focus on new or re-emerging issues.

Testing for known hazards and risks is just one aspect. The step change is to consider what other forms of information are not currently being used effectively to identify unknown risks.

The risks are moving. It's always going to be an evolving scenario. The question is how do we collectively get better at identifying those risks?

Systems are in place (eg. contaminants and residues) to address issues we are aware of but the work on incident prevention requires a more comprehensive analysis of the available information and a look at other potential sources.

A parallel system to the RASFF for authenticity is potentially a good idea to allow confirmed information on fraud to be better shared across Europe.

### **3. Systems of assurance**

Food businesses wouldn't just rely on contracts to assure themselves of product integrity. They use many ways of verifying supplies including accreditation, inspections and audits.

The majority of companies are BRC accredited and are subject to different audits.

### **4. Information sharing and intelligence**

FDF believes that it's in everyone's interests to protect the integrity of the supply chain. Just as food safety is not considered a competitive issue neither is authenticity and it's every company's own responsibility to make decisions on both safety and authenticity.

There is no obligation for businesses to share information, about, for example, quality unless it represents a food safety risk. There is a mechanism through the FSA Emerging Risks Consultative Forum (ERCF) to share information to inform data collection by local authorities, retailers etc. If a potential issue is not related to food safety, the first step is to ask is it an isolated incident or something occurring more widely that needs investigating?

Improved communications between enforcement officers and FSA is crucial to ensure relevant information is shared in a timely manner.

There can be nervousness on the part of industry to provide sensitive data to the FSA as there is no protocol and clarity on how that data might be used.

## **5. Governance of risk**

Technical committees meet on a regular basis to discuss regulatory issues – labelling, contaminants etc. If there was an incident that needed reporting the company would inform FDF and contact the FSA directly.

Companies keep their risk matrices under review.

## **6. Other comments**

Small industry players often experience different challenges in the management of risk.

Industry will be interested in how the different reviews (commissioned on the back of the horsemeat incident) fit together as four different outcomes in four different jurisdictions would be the worst possible outcome for them.

## **7. Further action**

FDF said it would look into the possibility of Chris Elliott and the Review team speaking to food manufacturers about board governance of risk.

11 September 2013