NEWSMONTH

June 2020

MARKET NEWS

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Focus on China

Coronavirus may cause drop in pork production

The COVID-19 outbreak may result in the decline of nearly 500,000 metric tons of pork produced this year in China, according to a report released by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, pork imports may double this year, which will help narrow the gap between supply and demand, the China Agricultural Sector Development Report 2020 said.

Due to the loss of stock of breeding sows caused by African swine fever since late 2018, production of pork in China will continue to fall this year, though at a slower rate. It is expected pork production will start to increase next year, the report said.

If the COVID-19 outbreak had not occurred, the production of pork in China might have reached about 38.3 million tons. Now that number may fall to 37.8 million tons due to the epidemic, which has led to the closure of a large number of slaughterhouses and difficulties in transporting piglets, hogs, pork and feed. These troubles will slow the process of recovery of breeding sows stock and pork production, the report said.

Due to the impact of the outbreak, pork production for the next two years will also be slightly affected, which may delay the full recovery of production in China, the report said.

Meanwhile, pork imports this year may reach nearly 4 million tons-compared with 2.1 million tons last year-a record high driven by demand and lowered tariffs, according to the report, which will help ease the gap between domestic supply and demand.

Although African swine fever's affect on pork production in China has been gradually declining, the COVID-19 outbreak is causing new uncertainty in the industry. Authorities should take equally strict measures to control both diseases to help increase the supply of pork, the most consumed meat in China, the report suggested.

Local agricultural authorities should encourage enterprises in the industry-including pig farmers, processing companies and related logistics firms-to speed up the resumption of production that was halted by the COVID-19 epidemic, after making sure they have taken adequate control and prevention measures, it said.

Ye Xingqing, a researcher in agricultural economy at the Development Research Center of the State Council, said in addition to COVID-19, African swine fever remains a major potential threat to pork production in China.

"There is a possibility that another African swine fever outbreak can occur at any time

as long as vaccines are not available," he said, adding that sustained efforts are needed from pig farmers to prevent the spread of the disease.

China forestry authority strengthens wildlife consumption ban

China will continue to promote the banning of consuming wild animals, and strengthen measures to prevent wildlife consumption by the end of September, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

Follow-up work will focus on the implementation of compensation, and assistance measures in proper disposal.

The administration stressed all localities should develop a deeper understanding of the importance and urgency of eliminating the eating of wild animals, and proactively report the situation to local authorities.

China will severely punish the illegal hunting and trading of wild animals, according to this year's government work report.

China strengthens tracking of hog transport to control animal disease

China will step up the regulation of hog transport to further contain the spread of African swine fever, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said.

Starting on July 1, companies and individuals that transport hogs will be required to register their basic personal information with a mini-program on WeChat, which will be managed by the national animal disease control authorities, the ministry said in a statement released Friday.

The transport information of each hog will be linked with data on its respective quarantine certificate, allowing authorities to better track the animal and reduce the risk of spreading African swine fever, the ministry said.

China has been applying big data and other information technology to improve the efficiency of animal quarantine oversight. A separate statement by the agricultural ministry Friday encouraged local authorities to use information technology to control diseases at every stage, from the breeding to the slaughtering of animals.

Thanks to the strict control measures, the number of reported cases of African swine fever has been dwindling since late 2018, Han Changfu, minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, noted in May.

International News

FDA extends application period for importer program because of pandemic

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is extending its application period for its Voluntary Qualified Importer Program (VQIP) to July 31. The application extension is because of the COVID-19 public health emergency and current travel

restrictions and advisories.

The importer program is a voluntary fee-based program that provides expedited review and import entry of human and animal foods into the United States for participating importers. Consumers and importers benefit from this program, according to an FDA statement issued Friday.

The period for importers to submit their notice of intent to participate and their completed application for the VQIP for the Fiscal Year 2021 benefits period has been extended. The application portal will remain open until July 31, 2020. After it closes, the agency will review applications before the start of the annual benefits period, beginning with the federal fiscal year on Oct. 1, 2020.

The pandemic has hindered the ability of accredited Certification Bodies to conduct on-site regulatory audits and issue certifications to foreign entities, which are required as part of the VQIP application, according to the FDA statement.

To participate, importers must meet certain eligibility criteria, which include ensuring that the facilities of their foreign suppliers are certified by Certification Bodies that have been accredited through the FDA's Accredited Third-Party Certification Program.

The FDA says it is continuing its efforts to ensure that the application process for VQIP is as efficient as possible.

New maximum levels for perchlorate will apply from July 1, 2020

The European Commission recently published an amendment to Regulation (EC) No. 1881/2006, which sets maximum levels for perchlorate. The new values, which differ from the originally determined transition values, will apply across the EU from July 1, 2020.

Overview of the maximum levels of perchlorate in specific foods.

FOOD	**Value (mg/kg)**
Fruits and vegetables	0.05
excepting - Cucurbitaceae and kale	0.10
- Potherbs and fresh herbs	0.50
Tea (Camellia sinensis), dried Herb and fruit tea, dried	0.75
Infant formula, follow-on formula, food for special medical purposes, for infants and small children	0.01
Baby food	0.02
Processed cereal-based foods	0.01

Poland's Salmonella poultry problem continues

A variety of European countries have issued nearly 100 warnings about Salmonella in chilled and frozen poultry from Poland since the start of March this year.

Data from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) portal shows alerts from Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Italy, France and Romania. Most notifications were made by Lithuania, followed by Czech Republic and Bulgaria.

Involved serotypes include Enteritidis, Infantis, Typhimurium, Saintpaul, Derby, Newport, and Mbandaka. European regulation on fresh poultry mentions Salmonella Enteritidis and Typhimurium as a food safety criterion as these

serotypes represent the main risk for public health. It considers chicken contaminated with other types as compliant or that it should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The EU produced an estimated 15.2 million tons of poultry meat in 2018. The main producer in that year with 2.5 million tons was Poland.

Multiple seizures in Lithuania

Lithuanian authorities revealed that during the first five months of this year more than 100 tons of poultry meat was not allowed to be sold and nine tons of Salmonella-infected poultry was banned in the last few weeks of May. After detection of any type of Salmonella in Lithuania, the sale of products is prohibited.

The State Food and Veterinary Service's (VMVT) inspections found that poultry meat from Poland falls into the group of high-risk products due to safety and quality discrepancies.

From early April to mid-May, VMVT assessed the safety and quality of 230 tons of poultry meat. Lab results showed that as much as 61 tons were unsafe and contaminated with Salmonella bacteria, most of which originated in Poland.

Companies that distribute such poultry meat in Lithuania are sanctioned and instructed to strengthen internal self-monitoring procedures, select manufacturers and suppliers more carefully, to audit them regularly and ensure reliability.

In May, the agency announced it had seized 6.2 tons of poultry meat in the past few weeks. The safety and quality of more than 22 tons, or 18 batches, of poultry from Lithuanian producers and imported from Poland, Romania and Hungary were assessed. Three of five non-compliant batches came from Poland with one each from Romania and Hungary.

In April, another 19 tons of poultry meat from Poland were not allowed to be put on the market. The decision was taken after lab testing found that five batches were contaminated with Salmonella. In the first week of April, VMVT inspectors stopped the sale of 25 tons, or three batches, of fresh Polish poultry meat contaminated with Salmonella. At that time, the supply of about 75 tons of poultry meat to the Lithuanian market had been banned in 2020. Of the 19 batches, 18 originated in Poland.

Bulgarian and Romanian action

DG Sante, the European Commission's unit for policy on food safety and health, assessed Polish controls for poultry during an audit in March and April 2019. Despite revealing some problems it also found Poland was trying to tackle the high and increasing number of alerts linked to Salmonella in poultry products.

The Bulgarian Food Safety Authority revealed in April this year that it had found two shipments of more than 32,000 kilograms of frozen chicken legs from Poland contaminated with Salmonella.

Consignments were checked as part of the agency's enhanced controls on poultry meat and by-products originating in Poland and destined for Bulgaria.

In May, the agency ordered the destruction of more than 19 tons of Polish poultry meat contaminated with Salmonella after a positive result from chilled chicken legs.

In Romania, as part of checks from the end of March to the end of April, two samples of frozen chicken breast fillets from Poland were found to be contaminated with Salmonella Enteritidis.

The entire quantity of 21 tons, of which one ton of poultry meat was from Bihor county and 20 tons from Ilfov county, was officially detained before being destroyed.

Norway, China food safety project call opens soon

Two research groups in Norway and China are planning a joint call for projects in food safety.

The Research Council of Norway (RCN) and National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) call for proposals will open on June 15 with a deadline of Sept. 2, 2020.

It is open to applications within food safety in aquaculture and land-based food value chains.

Funding is available for projects that address challenges related to two topics, either separately or combined. Proposals must come from eligible research organizations and institutions in Norway and China and the call is only in English.

Two topic areas

The first topic area is optimum food production with maximum control of contaminants and other harmful substances being essential to ensure food and feed safety, but risk factors can still be altered and occur during processing, storing and handling chain to the consumer.

The second covers implementing resource-efficient circular economy principles across the food system while reducing environmental footprints may have unforeseen effects on food safety.

Untraditional applications, circuit focus and cross-applications will present new challenges, generating a need for knowledge about interactions between nutrients and different hazards through the supply chain from production to

consumption.

"All raw materials utilized in animal and fish feed are a potential source of contaminants. When introducing new, non-traditional feed ingredients, knowledge about relevant contaminants, the bioavailability, bioaccessibility, bioaccumulation, and biomagnification of these contaminants in animal tissue, and health risks to and the animal itself and humans is crucial," according to RCN.

The Research Council may provide Norwegian Krone 3 million to 5 million (U.S. $300,000 to $500,000) per project. Funding may be sought for joint researcher projects for two to three years, including dissemination and networking activities such as workshops and conferences. The project must start between Jan. 1, and Aug. 1, 2021.

Norway and China research

A Memorandum of Understanding on collaboration between Norway and China was signed in April 2017. As part of this, RCN and NSFC started a program for joint funding of Sino-Norwegian research projects in mutually agreed fields.

Food safety is the absence, or safe, acceptable levels, of hazards in food that may harm the health of consumers, according to the announcement. Foodborne hazards can be microbiological, chemical or physical, e.g. bacteria, viruses, agricultural, aquacultural and industrial chemicals, heavy metals, radionuclide and pesticide residues.

There is a critical need in assuring food stays safe at every stage of the supply chain from production to harvest, processing, storage, distribution, preparation and consumption.

Plans for publication in peer-review journals accessible in Norway and China are strongly encouraged. Grants to support recruitment of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows should be integral components of the proposal.

FDA's food additive regulations fail to address toxic chemicals in food

Covid-19 is bringing out the hoarder in all of us. Canned goods, packaged foods, and bottled water are flying off shelves almost as soon as they are stocked. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) waylays concerns that fresh produce may carry the virus. It's easier for us to consider food safety in terms of pathogen contamination such as Salmonella and E-coli, or in the present case, Covid-19. What often remains unaddressed are the food safety issues presented by toxic chemicals within the very thing we hope is keeping our food safe in the first place: food packaging.

Toxic chemicals found in our foods

Plastic packaging is ubiquitously used in our food supply systems. Found in bottles, cans, and paperboard, plastics keep food fresh, stable, protract shelf life, keep pests out, and prevent bacterial contamination.

However, chemicals that make up these plastics can migrate into food with which it comes into contact. And these chemicals are cause for concern having been linked to major health issues such as cancer, birth defects, and autism.

While these chemicals are regulated in our water by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the FDA regulates chemicals used in packaging that come into contact with food as indirect food additives.

FDA food additives regulations include a process for determining when migration of a food contact substance to food is "so trivial as not to require

regulation of the substance as a food additive." The FDA exempts a food contact substance with a dietary exposure of less than 0.5 ppb or, if it is already cleared for use as a directive additive, exposure from the food contact use must be less than 1% of the Accepted Daily Intake (ADI).

This migration standard doesn't account for bioaccumulation of chemicals found in multiple products within a person's diet. And many of the health issues associated with food additives typically happen when people are continuously exposed to small amounts over long periods of time.

Regulations governing the safe use of plastic chemicals used as food contact substances focus on what might migrate from the polymer into the food, an not the complex variations in the polymerization process. Thus substances used in accordance with good manufacturing practices are considered part of the basic polymer and are implicitly cleared along with the polymer, requiring no additional testing for its safety.

Rather than a packaging company needing to prove the safety of its product, the burden is placed on the FDA to prove it is unsafe.

There are currently three classification of chemicals found in food packaging that have gained widespread attention: phthalates, bisphenol A (BPA), and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

Phthalates

Phthalates can disrupt hormones and have been linked to genital birth defects in infant boys and learning and behavior problems in older children. And yet these phthalates have been found in cheeseburgers, sandwiches, and Kraft's macaroni and cheese.

Within our food system, phthalates are used to increase flexibility of plastics. While research shows that they migrate into foods from every point along the supply chain, a study found that dining out was associated with the highest phthalate exposure among Americans, with levels nearly 35 percent higher than people who reported eating food mostly purchased at the grocery store.

Having already found that levels presented are safe, the FDA hasn't addressed multiple petitions requesting the FDA deem the use of phthalates in food packaging unsafe. This despite the FDA's prohibition on carcinogenic food contact materials. And yet phthalates, which have found to be linked to cancer, remain in food packaging.

BPA

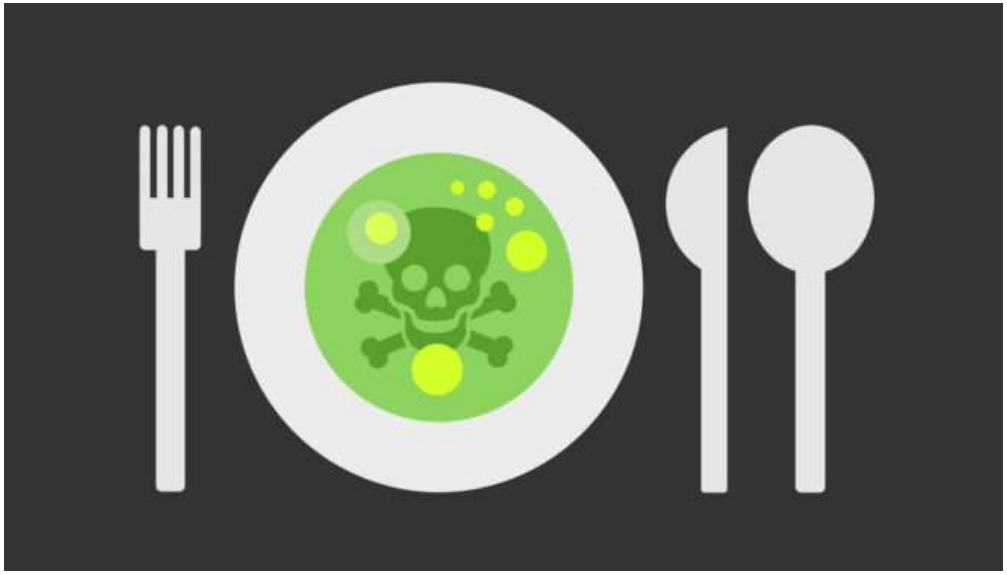
Considered a safe indirect food additive by the FDA, BPA is found in soda and food cans.

BPA is also a known endocrine disruptor. It can act like estrogen in the body and potentially change the timing of puberty, decrease fertility, increase body fat, and affect the nervous and immune systems. It's also connected with childhood obesity, and heart disease.

Dr. David Feldman, a professor at Stanford University who almost 30 years ago discovered the link between polycarbonate containers and BPA migration, said of today's state of BPA use: "We are still exposed to this molecule in our food supply, it's in our urine. The question of how bad it is, well, it's still debated."

When petitions called for the FDA to amend its food additive regulations to ban BPA, the FDA would not address them. But as a response to consumer pressure, retailers chose not to wait for a regulatory decision and stopped selling reusable plastic water and baby bottles made with BPA in 2008.

The FDA finally banned BPA in baby bottles, sippy cups, and infant formula packaging. But it was only at the request of the plastics industry after its abandonment of said uses; it had nothing to do with the safety issues they pose.



PFAS

Known as "forever chemicals," some PFAS persist in the environment and in our bodies. While people are mostly likely exposed by consuming PFAS-contaminated water or food, exposure also occurs from products that contain PFAS.

Wonder what kind of products contain PFAS? There are PFAS approved for use on paper or cardboard to prevent grease from going through them. These include microwave popcorn bags, pizza boxes, fast food wrappers, and even compostable food containers.

PFAS have been linked to a variety of health issues, including cancers, reproductive problems, lower immunity after tetanus and diptheria vaccination, high cholesterol, thyroid function, and liver injury.

In the Fourth National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals, CDC scientists measured at least 12 PFAS in the blood serum (the clear portion of blood) of participants aged 12 years and older who have taken part in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) since 1999. The scientists found four PFAS in the serum of nearly all of the people tested, indicating widespread exposure to these PFAS in the U.S. population.

Last year, the FDA released a report analyzing 91 samples of food products for PFAS and found 14 with detectable levels. Among them were ground turkey, tilapia, and chocolate cake. The cake contained 17,640 parts per trillion of PFPeA, one of the many PFAS chemicals. By way of comparison, the EPA set a health advisory level in drinking water of 70 parts per trillion for PFOA and PFOS.

PFOA and PFOS are first-generation PFAS that are so toxic that U.S. manufacturers largely phased them out by 2015, though U.S. law doesn't prohibit companies from importing them. These types of PFAS, the FDA uses the EPA's toxicity reference value when conducting a safety assessment. The FDA does not currently have toxicity reference values for dietary exposure for PFAS other than PFOA and PFOS.

Chemical companies have replaced first-generation PFAS with other chemicals in the PFAS family. Next generation PFAS act a lot like their predecessors, with early studies demonstrating that they are similarly dangerous.

Current regulations aimed at addressing toxic substances

California's Proposition 65, officially known as the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, requires businesses to provide warnings to

Californians about significant exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm. BPA, phthalates, and PFOA and PFOS are on this list of chemicals managed by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA). However, OEHHA has not set maximum allowable dose levels for PFOA or PFOS.

And now California's Department of Toxic Substances (DTSC) has identified PFAS, BPA and phthalates in food packaging for potential candidates as priority products under its Safer Consumer Products program. If finalized, this would require manufacturers of these chemical-product pairs to conduct an analysis to determine if safer alternatives exist.

Similarly, Washington state enacted a law prohibiting PFAS use in food packaging, providing there is a safer option.

And Maine passed a law banning the intentional use of phthalates and PFAS in food and beverage packaging upon identification of a viable replacement.

Bucking the trend of needing a viable alternative, the city of San Francisco has banned the use of single-use food service ware containing PFAS.

And while local and state governments are taking the lead to address PFAS in the food system, Congress's recently approved annual defense spending bill includes several provisions aimed at PFAS. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) prohibits the use of PFAS in the assembly and packaging of military ready-to-eat meals starting October 1, 2021.

The NDAA also requires public water systems serving more than 10,000 persons to monitor PFAS under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Wouldn't address the rural areas where agricultural water may be contaminated.

How businesses are tackling toxic chemicals in food packaging

The plastic packaging market is a multi-billion dollar industry expected to reach $320 billion by 2027. You can imagine that with this much money involved, disruptive changes aren't exactly welcomed. And without regulators, it's up to consumers to force retailers to demand alternative packaging from suppliers.

It would be almost impossible to successfully litigate a personal injury claim based on exposure to BPA, phthalates and PFAS in food packaging. With their prevalent use, a claimant wouldn't be able to prove their injuries was caused by a single product or line of products, or even know which manufacturer to implicate.

Whether because it lacks the mandate, budget and political will to modernize our broken chemical safety system, the FDA usually take no action or simply follows industry's suit.

So while our regulators and courts fail to provide the arenas in which to address food safety and chemical usage, the court of "public opinion" still provides the best recourse. In response to consumer concerns, businesses take the lead in making necessary changes.

Earlier this year, Taco Bell announced its plan to phase out phthalates, BPA, and PFAS from its food packaging by 2025. The fourth largest food-outlet in the United States, the company stated that it had decided to remove the chemicals from its packaging based on its responsibility to "improve public health" for the 40 million customers served per week, most of whom "care about sustainability." The company did not give details on how it would implement the plan or say what alternatives would be used.

Now with Covid-19 changing how people eat, it may be possible that a shift away

from eating out and towards cooking at home may decrease our exposure to toxic chemicals. However, an increase in the consumption of packaged, bottled, and canned food and beverages may offset any benefits from limiting take-out.

And with consumers less concerned with chemicals leaching into their food than they are with the potential for a virus to get into their food, hopefully businesses like Taco Bell will continue to change practices and eliminate toxic chemicals from food packaging.

U.S. FDA 'aware' of China testing food for coronavirus

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has said it is aware of reports that China will begin testing foods for Coronavirus.

Frank Yiannas, Deputy Commissioner of Food Policy and Response at the FDA, wrote on Twitter that there is currently no evidence of the transmission of COVID-19 through food and no known or suspected cases linked to food.

"The FDA is aware of reports that China will begin testing foods particular produce, seafood and meat for COVID-19. We continue to review all available science as we assess the virus that causes COVID-19. Following standard hygiene practices, safe food handling, and using cooking practices that protect us from foodborne illness remain important," he posted.

Yiannas directed people to the FDA's frequently asked questions page for more information.

Link to imported salmon rejected

Beijing has reported more than 100 coronavirus cases in the past week after going almost two months without an infection. The spike is thought to have started at Xinfadi, one of the biggest wholesale food markets in Asia.

Following the new cases of COVID-19 some reports made a link to imported salmon and findings on a cutting board, supposedly used to prepare the fish in a wholesale market. Out of 40 positive samples from tests of employees and the environment at the market, one was taken from a cutting board used for fileting salmon.

The Norwegian Seafood Council has reassured consumers and buyers of Norwegian seafood about the safety of such products after what it called "unsubstantiated rumors" on the source of infection.

"Our understanding is that comprehensive control of fresh foods has been introduced to any goods going into Beijing. Of course, the links being made in some media between salmon and the virus outbreak is unfortunate. We need facts on the table, and both WHO, FAO and the Norwegian Food Safety Authority are clear in their communication regarding this," said Anders Nordøy Snellingen, manager of the Norwegian Seafood Council's global operations.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) issued guidance stating there is no evidence of food or packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19 and a question and answer section on the impact on fisheries and aquaculture.

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority (Mattilsynet) reports there are no known cases of infection via contaminated food, imported food or water so fish and seafood from Norway are safe to eat.

Hong Kong's testing of imported salmon negative

It is uncertain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces. Research indicates that all coronaviruses can survive on surfaces from a few hours to several days. This will vary under different conditions, such as type of surface, temperature, sunlight and air humidity, according to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI).

The Global Salmon Initiative (GSI) said seafood, like other surfaces, may become contaminated if adequate food handling and sanitation measures are not in place, or when handled by an infected person. Any link to salmon may be the result of cross-contamination. GSI members include AquaChile, Australis Seafoods, Bakkafrost, Blumar, Cermaq, Grieg Seafood, Mowi, Multiexport Foods, New Zealand King Salmon, Nova Sea, Salmones Austral, Camanchaca, Tassal and Ventisqueros.

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in Hong Kong tested 16 salmon samples this week from Norway, Chile, Ireland, Iceland, and Denmark and all of them were negative for coronavirus.

The agency said in view of recent media reports that coronavirus was detected on chopping boards used for cutting salmon during a COVID-19 case investigation in Beijing, it took the samples from import and wholesale levels from different countries.

Overview identifies difficulties in preventing food fraud

Barriers to tackling food fraud include the cost and capability of authenticity testing, a changing mode of operation, and a complex regulatory system, according to experts.

Contributors to an overview about food fraud said evidence suggests it continues to be an issue in the global supply chain. Prevention strategies include scientific analysis to test food authenticity, supply chain risk assessment, and data-led strategies such as intelligence gathering.

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) is the U.K.

Parliament's in-house source of scientific information. To produce POSTnotes, advisers and fellows talk to stakeholders from industry, government and academia. The aim is to provide MPs and peers with an overview of food fraud including potential impacts in the UK.

Input into the document came from representatives of the Food Standards Agency, Fera Science, University of Manchester and Government Chemist, LGC as well as Dr. John Spink of Michigan State University and professor Chris Elliott from Queen's University Belfast.

Tackling the issue and public health risk

Examples of high-profile cases include adding undeclared horsemeat to a variety of beef products in the U.K. and Europe in 2013, and presence of ingredients such as olive or myrtle leaves in about one in four U.K. samples of oregano in 2016.

Barriers to combatting the problem include the lack of a globally agreed definition making it difficult to assess the scale of the problem and generate statistics on its impact.

Many authenticity testing methods require specialist instrumentation and skills, which can be costly for industry and local authorities and the enforcement system for food laws is split between multiple bodies, including local authorities and regulators.

While food fraud has a financial and reputational impact on businesses, it may also pose a health risk by exposing consumers to toxic chemicals, pathogenic bacteria, or mislabeled allergens. One example cited in the briefing comes from 2016 when a restaurant owner was sent to prison after substituting almond powder with mixed nut powder containing peanuts, resulting in a customer's death.

Detection challenges

Foods often reported to be adulterated include herbs and spices, coffee, seafood, honey and olive oil. However, there are concerns fraudsters may target foods subject to less rigorous controls, making fraud harder to detect.

Between April 2018 and March 2019, 4,996 food samples were tested for composition or labelling on behalf of local authorities in England compared with 24,855 samples tested for hygiene.

Food fraud typically involves substitution, addition, tampering, or misrepresentation of food, ingredients, or food packaging. It affects consumer choice and confidence and could lead to consumption of foods that are normally restricted for ethical or religious reasons.

It is often undetectable except by scientific analysis. Testing can be targeted, where the analysis looks for a pre-defined characteristic, such as a specific adulterant or section of DNA, or non-targeted where multiple measurements of a sample are taken using a variety of techniques to get a sample's chemical fingerprint.

Leaving the EU and trade deals

Each food business has its own approach to testing authenticity of products. Retailers often have contractual agreements with suppliers that require them to do authenticity testing of their ingredients. Large retailers, such as supermarkets, typically have routine monitoring programs. The rise of online shopping has also made tracing food supply chains more difficult.

The FSA has said there is no evidence to suggest the U.K. will be more at risk

from food crime after leaving the European Union. However, some experts have said the EU's exit may impact the U.K.'s vulnerability to food fraud and is a risk to the safety and security of the food supply.

Concerns relate to checks on food imports, the U.K.'s food testing capacity and the extent of access to EU food fraud intelligence networks. After the transition period, foods imported into the U.K. will need to be checked and processed at the border.

Future trade deals may require adoption of new tests and standards for food and drink. Brexit may also cause sudden price increases and supply volatility, creating vulnerabilities to fraud.

Safety Alerts

Date	Brand Name(s)	Product Description	Product Type	Recall Reason Description	Company Name
06/23/2020	7-Select	Yogurt Pretzels	Food & Beverages, Allergens, Snack Food Item	Undeclared Peanuts	Mount Franklin Foods
06/23/2020	Little Salad Bar	Garden Salad	Food & Beverages, Vegetable Products, Foodborne Illness	Possible Cyclospora Contamination	ALDI
06/23/2020	Golden Nutrition Inc.	Anti-Viral Immune Enhancement Capsules	Food & Beverages,	Unsubstantiated Health Claims on Label	Golden Nutrition Inc.
06/22/2020	Flagstone Foods LLC	North Star Sweet & Salty Caramel Trail Mix	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared Cashews	Flagstone Foods LLC
06/22/2020	Hy-Vee Inc.	Garden Salad, Bagged	Food & Beverages,	Potential Cyclospora Contamination	Hy-Vee Inc.
06/22/2020	Gordon Choice	Imitation Crab Supreme Style	Food & Beverages, Allergens	May contain undeclared egg white	Trident Seafoods
06/19/2020	Fresh Express	Southwest Chopped Kit	Food & Beverages, Allergens	Undeclared wheat, soy, cashews and coconut	Fresh Express
06/19/2020	Hill Country Fare	Pink Lemonade, Citrus Punch, Fruit Drink and Grape Drink	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared Milk	H-E-B
06/12/2020	Captain Rusty's	Undeclared fish, shellfish, wheat, eggs, soy, and milk	Food & Beverages, Allergens, Seafood/Seafood Product	Undeclared fish, shellfish, wheat, eggs, soy, and milk	Rusty's Seafood Market
06/12/	Now	Raw	Food &	Potential	NOW Health

2020	Real Food	Macadamia Nuts	Beverages, Nuts & Nut Products, Foodborne Illness	Salmonella contamination	Group, Inc.
06/11/2020	Xi Zhi Liang	Konjac powder jelly cups	Food & Beverages,	Potential choking hazard	Rong Shing Trading NY Inc.
05/26/2020	Johnson Sea Products	Crab cakes	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared wheat and soy	Johnson Sea Products

Enterprise News

Dutch firms found liable in fipronil scandal

A Dutch court has found two companies liable in a 2017 fipronil egg scandal.

Chickfriend and Chickclean failed to fulfill agreements with poultry farmers in 2016 and 2017 for red mite control in chickens. In this period, about 250 poultry farmers, or 20 percent of such farms in the Netherlands, had cleaning done with Dega-16 by Chickfriend or Chickclean.

Based on evidence, the court assumed the owners knew that the Dega-16 product contained fipronil and that its use to control red mites is prohibited. Dega-16 was presented to customers as an agent consisting of eucalyptus oil and menthol (essential oils).

Issue prompted huge egg recall

Fipronil is authorized to be used as a veterinary medicine to combat fleas, mites and ticks in dogs and cats but forbidden for use in animals intended for the food chain, such as chickens.

The detection of fipronil residues in July 2017 led to millions of eggs being withdrawn from across the European Union. Hong Kong, Lebanon, Liberia, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa also received contaminated egg products. Contamination was caused by illegal use of non-approved veterinary medicinal products in poultry farms.

A total 26 EU countries reported the presence of fipronil in eggs and egg products, with more than 45 nations affected worldwide, including the United States, Israel and Canada.

The incident resulted in the most intensive exchange of information in the

history of the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) portal with more than 700 follow-up notifications to the original notice transmitted in 2017.

Claims against NVWA and Belgian supplier

Because of contamination with fipronil, poultry farmers in Europe had to close, eggs were withdrawn from the market and chickens were culled. The court found it was "unlikely" that the stables, chickens, manure and eggs were contaminated with fipronil for any other reason.

A total of 120 poultry farmers claimed damages from Chickfriend and Chickclean and owners of the companies.

According to the companies, the Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) did not sufficiently supervise the ban on the use of fipronil. However, this claim was dismissed by the court.

A claim by Chickfriend and Chickclean for damages against the Belgian supplier of Dega-16 was also dismissed. The companies said the supplier added fipronil to Dega-16 without their knowledge. But it was established that this was done at the request of Chickfriend and Chickclean, according to the court.

The amount of compensation per poultry farmer will be determined at a later date in a separate procedure at the court.

Warning letter sent to Iacofano's Group LLC over sanitation risks

As part of its enforcement activities, the Food and Drug Administration sends warning letters to entities under its jurisdiction. Some letters are not posted for public view until weeks or months after they are sent.

Business owners have 15 days to respond to FDA warning letters. Warning letters often are not issued until a company has been given months to years to correct problems.

Iacofano's Group LLC, Charleston, SC

John L. Iacofano, owner

In a May 28 warning letter the FDA described a Jan. 7-22, 2020, inspection at Iacofano's Group LLC's ready-to-eat food manufacturing facility. Inspectors found that the company had serious violations of the Current Good Manufacturing Practice, Hazard Analysis, and Risk-Based Preventive Controls for Human Food regulation.

FDA's inspection resulted in issuance of an FDA Form 483a. The significant violations are as follows:

Hazard Analysis and Risk-Based Preventive Controls:

When FDA requested their food safety plan during the inspection, they provided documents titled "Iacofano's Catering & Foodservice Standard Operating Procedure" and "HACCP-based SOPs." As explained below, these documents collectively contain some but not all required elements of a food safety plan.

1. They did not conduct a hazard analysis for each type of food manufactured, processed, packed, or held at their facility, including their RTE brownies, macadamia nut cookies, and grape products to identify and evaluate known or reasonably foreseeable hazards to determine whether there are any hazards requiring a preventive control.

2. They did not identify and evaluate food allergens as a known or reasonably foreseeable hazard to determine whether allergens are a hazard requiring a preventive control. Their facility manufactures various products with

different allergen profiles on the same day and on shared equipment, such as cutting boards and knives, which can result in allergen cross-contact without appropriate controls.

3. They did not identify and evaluate environmental pathogens, such as Listeria monocytogenes and Salmonella, as a known or reasonably foreseeable hazard to determine whether environmental pathogens are a hazard requiring a preventive control. Their facility manufactures RTE food which is exposed to the environment prior to packaging. The packaged food does not receive a lethal treatment or otherwise include a control measure (such as a formulation lethal to the pathogen or control by the supply chain or downstream customer) that would significantly minimize the pathogen.

4. They did not identify and implement preventive controls to provide assurances that any hazards requiring a preventive control will be significantly minimized or prevented and the food manufactured, processed, packed, or held by their facility will not be adulterated. Preventive controls include, as appropriate to the facility and the food, process controls, food allergen controls, sanitation controls, supply-chain controls, and a recall plan. They have established some preventive controls, e.g., their "HACCP-based SOPs" include process controls in their procedures for "Cooking Potentially Hazardous Foods" and "Cooling Potentially Hazardous Foods." However, the firm lacks other preventive controls such as food allergen controls. Their manager provided their "HACCP-Based SOP" titled "Preventing Cross-Contamination During Storage and Preparation" as their allergen control program; however the document does not mention allergens or include all the procedures, practices, and processes to protect food from allergen cross-contact and ensure that the finished food is not misbranded.

5. They did not document the monitoring of preventive controls. When monitoring records were requested on January 8, 2020, they were only able to provide blank records.

6. They manufacture RTE food that is exposed to the environment at numerous stages of manufacturing and does not receive a subsequent control to significantly minimize or prevent environmental pathogens. They have identified sanitation control procedures (e.g., Equipment Cleaning and Sanitizing) in their "Standard Operating Procedures," and they have an Environmental Monitoring Program. However, they did not implement their environmental monitoring procedures. Specifically, their environmental monitoring program states that they will conduct environmental swabbing for Listeria spp., Salmonella, and total coliform/E. coli at specific frequencies depending on the location. The frequencies are as follows: (redacted). However, they stated during the inspection that only (redacted) locations are (redacted). Further, their most recent analytical results, dated July 17, 2019, only show results for Listeria.

Current Good Manufacturing Practices (Subpart B)

1. They did not take reasonable measures and precautions to ensure persons working in direct contact with food, food-contact surfaces, and food-packaging materials conform to hygienic practices while on duty to the extent necessary to protect against allergen cross-contact and against contamination of food.

2. On January 7 and 8, 2020, multiple employees were observed wearing gloves and handling insanitary objects before returning to handling food,

food contact surfaces, and processing utensils without changing gloves. On January 8, 2020, an employee was observed handling food with torn gloves.

3. On January 7, 2020, an employee was observed handling Macadamia Nut Cookies, which contain the major food allergens wheat, soy, milk, tree nuts, and egg, and then without changing their gloves handling bread for another product which was only labeled as containing wheat and soy.

4. They did not maintain their plant in a clean and sanitary condition or keep their plant in repair adequate to prevent food from becoming adulterated:

5. The ceiling in the kitchen and the food preparation rooms were observed to be rusty, sagging, discolored, and in disrepair.

6. A ceiling vent in front of the preparation room freezer was observed to be covered in filth.

7. Floor tiles were observed to be loose in multiple locations in the packing room and kitchen, preventing adequate cleaning.

8. The floor threshold in front of kitchen freezer (redacted) was observed to be deeply pitted with exposed wood, which is a surface that is not easily cleanable.

9. A residue was observed on shelves used to hold clean utensils.

10. The drain tubes for the freezers in the facility were observed to have built up frozen condensate on them, and in preparation room freezer (redacted) a cooler on the freezer floor was encased in frozen condensate.

11. They did not clean their non-food contact surfaces in a manner and as frequently as necessary to protect against contamination of food, food-contact surfaces, and food-packaging materials. Specifically, on January 7 and 8, 2020, FDA investigators observed:

12. Multiple shelves directly over food preparation areas had dust build up and debris.

13. Multiple utensil storage racks contained a residue build up on surfaces where cleaned utensils were stored.

14. Each individual engaged in manufacturing, processing, packing, or holding food (including temporary and seasonal personnel) or in the supervision thereof must receive training in the principles of food hygiene and food safety, including the importance of employee health and personal hygiene, as appropriate to the food, the facility and the individual's assigned duties. They did not establish and maintain documentation of this training. During the inspection, their Manager stated that employees undergo on-the-job training as well as Employee Health Training and Employee Food Safety Training; however, their firm was unable to provide any completed training records to demonstrate the employees had received any training.

Upfield invests €50m in future of plant-based foods

Upfield Group, a Dutch producer of plant-based margarines, spreads and cheeses is investing €50 million in a new state-of-the-art Food Science Centre in Wageningen, Netherlands.

The facility – which the company intends to open before the end of 2021 – aims to produce food made from plants as well as sustainable packaging solutions.

By choosing Wageningen – considered the Silicon Valley of the food industry – as the location of the new Upfield Food Science Centre, the company will be able to

maximize the benefits of the surrounding area including its proximity to The Wageningen University & Research (WUR), which is ranked as the world's leading University in Agri-Food and serves as the core of a leading Agri-Food Ecosystem.

Alongside plans for the new centre, the company has also submitted plans for a newly built Global Headquarter office will bring together Associates who are currently based in both Rotterdam and Amsterdam. The move will enhance collaboration between Associates currently working at different sites.

"Since Upfield was established under two years ago, we have already launched new and industry-leading plant-based cheese, cream, and butter products," said Group CEO David Haines.

"The new Upfield Food Science Centre will allow us to accelerate our ambitious agenda and develop even more options so people can enjoy great tasting, natural, plant-based foods that are not only beneficial to their health, but to the planet."

Asda and Tesco's chicken Campylobacter results above FSA target

The mega-supermarket chain Tesco has reported 9 percent of chickens tested in the first quarter this year had the highest level of Campylobacter contamination while Asda recorded 9.2 percent.

This is above the Food Standards Agency (FSA) target of 7 percent and Tesco's own benchmark of 5 percent of birds with more than 1,000 colony forming units per gram (cfu/g) of Campylobacter.

Tesco data shows 9 percent of 132 samples from January to March had the top level of contamination. It is double the percentage reported in the previous quarter.

"The safety and quality of the food we sell remains our top priority. The results this quarter were affected by a reduced sample size compared to previous tests, and we believe we'll see levels return to within our expected range in future," said a Tesco spokesperson.

Another large retailer, Asda, did not initially provide 1Q figures for 2020 or respond to a request for comment. However, it has now published data showing 9.2 percent of chickens were above the top level of contamination.

Overall picture

An FSA spokesman said reducing levels of Campylobacter is a priority for the agency and it expects industry to make progress.

"We are aware of a slightly higher average percentage for the nine major

retailers in the above 1,000 cfu/g category for Q1 2020 as compared with recent quarters. We are currently investigating various possible reasons for this. However, current levels remain low and the vast majority of retailers continue to collect results below the FSA target of 7 percent," he told Food Safety News.

"We continue to have an open dialogue with retailers and are encouraged to see that levels remain low for the vast majority of retailers. Any results which could indicate an increase in contamination will be thoroughly explored by the FSA alongside the retailer involved."

Grocery chain Sainsbury's reported 3 percent of chickens sampled were above the 1,000 cfu/g category from January to March this year. The Morrisons chain had 2.7 percent and Aldi had 2.8 percent.

Based on 333 samples of chickens sold at Marks and Spencer from January to March 6 percent were above 1,000 cfu/g in January, 3 percent in February and 1 percent in March.

Lidl recorded 5.5 percent of birds in the highest contamination category in 1Q 2020 while the figure for Co-op was 1.8 percent and zero for Waitrose and Partners.

"The key to our good results continue to be the incredible hard work of our farmers and suppliers combined with our own rigorous data gathering and analysis, surveying chicken both at the factory and on supermarket shelves," said a Waitrose & Partners spokesperson.

"Our testing regime is rigorous and because we know that the prevalence of Campylobacter is reduced over a product's shelf life, we have ensured our sampling is random and have adhered throughout the survey to the FSA testing protocol. These results demonstrate the robustness of our testing procedures and we are confident our approach to tackling Campylobacter is consistently effective."

No more quarterly analysis from FSA

FSA used to compile figures from the top food retailers on Campylobacter results for fresh shop-bought UK-produced chickens but stopped doing this after the second quarter of 2019.

"Following a review of the reporting arrangement in late 2019, the FSA decided that commenting on results over a longer period would be more beneficial and therefore would no longer comment on or publish quarterly data for major retailers on our website. The retailers continue to publish their own data on their respective websites. The FSA monitors these results and will be commenting on them in its annual update to the board on Campylobacter, due later this year," said the spokesman.

In the third quarter of July to September and the fourth from October to December, no retailers reported above the FSA 7 percent level for the percentage of chickens positive for Campylobacter with more than 1,000 cfu/g.

FSA also used to provide a breakdown of the contamination levels at 100-1,000 cfu/g, 10-99 cfu/g and a cfu/g less than 10.

Campylobacter is the most common cause of food poisoning in the U.K. and the infectious dose can be as low as a few hundred cells.

The FSA spokesman said limited data suggests that an infectious dose of Campylobacter may be as low as 100 organisms.

"However, levels between 100 and 1,000 cfu/g in raw chicken are unlikely to translate to an infectious dose if the chicken is thoroughly cooked and good

hygiene practices are followed throughout preparation – such as handwashing and the use of separate utensils to avoid cross-contamination. Major retailers remain committed to the open sharing of data with the FSA and we continue to monitor the situation for all levels, not just over 1,000 cfu/g," he said.

Primula recalls cheese due to Clostridium botulinum

Primula Ltd. has recalled cheese spread in tubes in the United Kingdom and Ireland because of possible contamination with Clostridium botulinum due to a production fault.

Primula, part of the Kavli Group, recalled 10 varieties after finding one product contained Clostridium botulinum during a routine test and due to concerns other items in the range could be affected.

Manufacturing controls that could potentially affect safety of the products could not be demonstrated satisfactorily by the company, according to the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) reported the issue relates to controlling factors to prevent the growth and toxin production by Clostridium botulinum. There's currently been no reports of illness.

All 150-gram chilled Primula plain original cheese spread, cheese spread with smoked paprika, cheese spread with jalapeno, light cheese spread, cheese spread with ham, cheese spread with chive and cheese spread with prawn with best before dates from Dec. 25, 2020, to Jan. 28, 2021, are affected.

The ambient 100-gram versions of Primula original cheese spread, cheese spread with ham and cheese spread with chives with best before dates Oct. 30, to Dec 10, 2020, are also involved.

Halt to production distribution

Primula issued a statement saying it was aware of a potential source of Clostridium botulinum in one of the cheese tube products so stopped all product distribution.

"We are also contacting retailers to instruct them to remove all Primula tubes from shelves with immediate effect. Customers are advised not to eat any Primula cheese tubes they have already purchased but instead to return these to stores in exchange for a full refund."

Officials said the company was liaising with environmental health officers and the FSA.

"We would like to reassure customers that instances like this are extremely rare. We would also like to apologize to those who won't be able to get their hands on our cheese for a short period of time while we work hard to resolve

the issue."

In April, Kavli UK said it would donate around 2,000 units per week of products including Primula to Gateshead Council to support people in the area and children in need as part of emergency food parcels. Kavli UK has operated in the North East since the 1930s and has headquarters in Gateshead's Team Valley.

A spokesman from Gateshead Council said it was working with the business on an issue brought to light by the company's own in-house control and inspection regime.

"Although investigations are at an early stage, it's thought that this problem may have been the result of a production fault affecting a number of specific batches of product. Efforts are now being made to identify those batches and ensure that they are removed from the food chain," he said.

"Environmental Health Officers last carried out an inspection of the premises six months ago and reported no issues. There have been no previous issues or concerns reported."

Botulism is a rare but life-threatening condition caused by toxins produced by Clostridium botulinum bacteria. In foodborne botulism, symptoms generally begin 18 to 36 hours after eating a contaminated food. However, they can start as soon as six hours after or up to 10 days later.

It can cause symptoms including general weakness, dizziness, double-vision, and trouble with speaking or swallowing. Difficulty in breathing, weakness of other muscles, abdominal distension and constipation may also occur. People experiencing these problems should seek immediate medical attention.

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