

What is food crime?

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Given the complexities of today's global food industry, the terms 'food fraud' and 'food crime' are frequently used, but what do they mean? According to the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) food fraud is: "A dishonest act or omission, relating to the production or supply of food, which is intended for personal gain or to cause loss to another party"; whereas food crime is described as: "Dishonesty relating to the production or supply of food, that is either complex or likely to be seriously detrimental to consumers, businesses or the overall public interest."

In fact, the NFCU was set up four years ago in response to the growing number of cases of food fraud and food crime, and specifically in response to the horse meat scandal. Food safety expert Professor Chris Elliott said "government cuts had dismantled much of the local-government apparatus, such as trading standards departments" and recommended a dedicated unit was created.

Awareness of food fraud and food crime is increasingly noticeably with the NFCU reporting that it had received more than 300 calls in the last three months from whistle-blowers reporting crimes in the food industry.

Food crime is, however, a global issue. In one of the biggest milk formula scandals in the past decade, 12 people in China have been accused of producing fake branded baby milk powder. They went on trial in Shanghai last month, accused of repackaging low-grade milk powder as well-known brands and, if found guilty, they could face life imprisonment. The case follows the high profile scandal in 2008 when some producers for the Chinese firm the Sanlu Group were found to have produced milk powder containing melamine, leading to the deaths of at least six children.

So, given that consumers and food producers can be separated by thousands of miles, it's easy to see how these criminals can make a huge impact on the food chain long before anyone is aware of a problem. Andy Morling from the NFCU said: "Supply chains can be impossibly complex and opaque, information from those working in food businesses is vital to our work." The NFCU is currently working across the UK with local authorities and police to tackle food crime.

Multiple different processes separate the end customer from the original source, from pickers and packers to farmers and factory workers. Increasingly, consumers are asking exactly how their food got to their kitchen table and questioning whether they can trust the labels on their food. Authenticate IS has been specially designed to enable food companies to easily and thoroughly keep track of their

entire supply chain, providing complete transparency and traceability of products and giving their customers confidence in their products. Developed by food industry experts Authenticate IS is the key to supply chain confidence, eliminating and minimising risk for your business.

For more information on how we can help please contact us on 01423 548 583 or email enquiries@authenticateis.com

Don't forget, we'll be at the Food Fraud Conference in Manchester on 3rd May!