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Food fraud vulnerability assessment tools used in food industry

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Abstract

In recent years, the issue of food fraud has become both widely discussed within the food industry and seemingly more prevalent, with incidents happening worldwide. The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of different types of anti-fraud tools within the UK food industry. The study utilised an online survey questionnaire and food manufacturing companies were invited to participate in the study via email and calls for participation through industry networks i.e. Food Integrity Intelligence Network (FIIN), the Federation of Bakers and the Food and Drink Federation. Nineteen food manufacturers returned the completed survey. Of the food businesses surveyed, most used their own in-house food fraud vulnerability assessment (FFVA) tools followed by the Campden Threat Assessment and Critical Control Point (TACCP). Campden TACCP is the evaluation of threats, identification of vulnerabilities and implementation of controls of the entire production process. The threats controlled by TACCP include economically motivated adulteration (EMA) and malicious contamination. Around one third of the companies reported being victims of food fraud. Food manufacturers were divided about the impact of conducting food fraud vulnerability assessments. Half of the food manufacturers were optimistic about the impact of FFVA whilst the rest were uncertain or negative. Positive impacts include raising awareness and ensuring integrity of food supply chain whilst negative views were associated with cost and concerns for brand reputation. The adoption and conduct of FFVA is still at its infancy and the full impact remains to be seen. However, with time and constant vigilance from the food industry, FFVA will benefit the sector and the safety and integrity of the food supply chain.

Keywords: control measures; food integrity; fraud; vulnerability assessment

Highlights

- One third of surveyed food manufacturers were victims of food fraud
- Most food manufacturers used their own in-house food fraud vulnerability assessment tools
- 47% were positive about impact of conducting food fraud vulnerability assessments

Introduction

Food fraud is a purposive act of substitution, addition, tampering or misrepresentation of food, food ingredients or food packaging and is carried out for the purpose of economic gain (Spink and Moyer,

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39 2011). Although food fraud detection and preventative measures have been developed and are
40 being implemented throughout the food supply chain (SSAFE, 2018; van Ruth et al., 2017), food
41 fraud cases are still reported globally. Recent cases include dilution of maple syrup with cheaper
42 table sugar (EC 2018), substitution of premium fish with other species (Xiong et al., 2018),
43 mislabelling of seafood (Pardo et al., 2018), repackaging rice with new expiry dates (Mutuko, 2018)
44 and mixing groundnuts with stones and gravel (Food Fraud Risk Information, 2018). The agri-food
45 industry needs to be constantly vigilant to protect the integrity of the food supply chain. The Elliot
46 Review proposed the implementation of a national food crime framework in the United Kingdom
47 after the 2013 horsemeat scandal (Elliott Review, 2014) leading to the introduction of the National
48 Food Crime Unit (NFCU). In addition to international and national preventative measures, supply
49 chains and individual food businesses must be prepared to mitigate, and where possible prevent,
50 food fraud from occurring. Everstine (2013) highlighted the need for a holistic and systematic
51 approach to mitigate food fraud via appropriate risk assessment techniques and use of historical
52 data sources and/or intelligence.

53

54 Research to date has tended to focus on analytical methods to detect food fraud. A number of
55 excellent reviews on analytical techniques on both targeted (i.e. where compound of interest is
56 known) and non-targeted methods (e.g. screening) have been published (Abbas et al., 2018; Esteki
57 et al., 2018; Valdes et al., 2018). The perceived increased prevalence of food fraud has also renewed
58 interest in consumer studies. For example, studies on attitudes and perceptions towards food fraud
59 and consumers' confidence in the food industry have been conducted in Bangladesh (Nasreen and
60 Ahmed, 2014), China (El Benni et al., 2019; Kendall et al., 2018a, b), the UK and EU (Barnett et al.,
61 2016; Charlebois et al., 2016; Van Rijswijk and Frewer, 2012) and Brazil (Breitenbach et al., 2018).

62

63 Conventional risk assessments are based on known criteria: the hazard (agent that can cause harm
64 or substitution); the severity (degree of harm including financial or economic penalty) of the hazard
65 if it occurs; and the likelihood (frequency) of the hazard to occur. Traditionally, food contaminants
66 (biological, chemical and physical agents that can cause harm), food allergens and food quality issues
67 are assessed independently but there is a need to consider risks in a more holistic approach
68 (Manning and Soon, 2016). In addition, food safety management systems are developed to manage
69 traditional food safety hazards and are not specifically designed for food fraud prevention and
70 control (van Ruth et al., 2017). However, there has been a move to incorporate risk assessments or
71 food fraud vulnerability assessments within third-party industry food safety and quality standards
72 (e.g. Global Standard for food safety, version 8, BRC 2018), requiring the food industry to identify

73 weaknesses and/or criticalities within their processing facilities or supply chains. Fraud vulnerability
74 is a weakness or flaw in the system that creates opportunities for fraudsters to take advantage of. It
75 is defined by three key fraud drivers i.e. opportunities, motivations and control measures (Spink,
76 Ortega, Chen, & Wu, 2017; van Ruth et al., 2017).

77

78 A number of risk assessments centred around fraud and food integrity issues have been developed
79 in recent years. Table 1 shows the various definitions of food fraud and defence. Campden Threat
80 Assessment and Critical Control Point (TACCP) is defined by PAS 96:2017 as the 'systematic
81 management of risk through the evaluation of threats, identification of vulnerabilities and
82 implementation of controls of the entire production process'. The threats controlled by TACCP
83 include economically motivated adulteration (EMA) and malicious contamination, extortion,
84 espionage, counterfeiting and cybercrime. TACCP is focused on identifying specific threats of
85 criminal and malicious activity that can impact food safety (Campden BRI, 2019; Swainson, 2019). It
86 follows the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) and requires users to
87 assemble a TACCP team, define the scope of study, review current TACCP measures, threat
88 characterisation, mitigation strategy development, horizon scanning for new or emerging threats,
89 implementation, recording and documentation and audit / review (Campden BRI, 2019). Questions
90 and considerations in TACCP are detailed for the product, premises and the business including
91 personnel security, controlling access to premises, services, processes and materials and secure
92 storage of transport vehicles (Campden BRI, 2019).

93

94 Vulnerability Assessment and Critical Control Point (VACCP) is used in conjunction with TACCP. It is
95 an inter-related process used to consider how vulnerable each point in the food process is to a
96 particular criminal or malicious activity (Campden BRI, 2019; Swainson, 2019). However, according to
97 GFSI (2017), TACCP and VACCP are defined separately. TACCP which evaluates threats is a 'process
98 to ensure the security of food and drink from intentional malicious attack including ideologically
99 motivated attack leading to contamination' (Table 1). Vulnerability is more of a state of being that
100 could lead to an incident (Spink, 2014). VACCP focuses on susceptibility or exposure to food fraud. Its
101 scope includes systematic prevention of potential adulteration of food – this could be intentional or
102 not, via identification of vulnerable points in the supply chain (Global Food Safety Resource, 2019).

103

104 Insert Table 1 here

105

106 In the United States of America, Spink et al. (2016) developed the Food Fraud Initial Screening Model
107 (FFISM) where users can review previous incidents and suspicious activities, assess risks and
108 prioritise their resources. Since FFISM is an initial screening tool, it allows for product groups with
109 lower risks or established controls to be removed from subsequent vulnerability assessment,
110 enabling companies to focus more specifically on higher risks. FFISM complements other assessment
111 tool such as the Safe Supply of Affordable Food Everywhere (SSAFE). Its versatility and free
112 accessibility allows users to assess vulnerabilities for different products, business size and region of
113 operation (SSAFE, 2018).

114

115 It is noted that risk assessment continues to be the key step to identify food safety issues including
116 fraud. The spice industry have tested vulnerability assessment tools such as the SSAFE, identifying
117 the spice chain as being of medium vulnerability to food fraud (Silvis et al., 2017). The dairy sector
118 too have utilised the SSAFE food fraud assessment tool and identified the Dutch milk supply chain as
119 having low to medium vulnerability to fraud (Yang et al. in press). Van Ruth et al. (2018) assessed a
120 number of other supply chains (fish, meat, dairy, olive oil and organic bananas) and found that
121 opportunities and motivations to commit fraud remain key fraud drivers in the food supply chain. It
122 is estimated that fraud costs the UK food economy £11 billion a year but this is only the tip of the
123 iceberg as fraud is massively underreported. By preventing fraud in food supply chain it is possible to
124 reduce these estimated costs. In fact, by tackling fraud, this could boost the UK food industry's profit
125 by £4.5 billion (Fraud Review Team, 2006; White 2017). However, to date, there is very little
126 information regarding the number of reported frauds committed in the food industry or number of
127 food industry / supply chain victimised by fraud. As fraud is not a policing priority this has resulted in
128 substantial numbers of un-investigated cases (Doig, 2018). A culture within the food industry that
129 questions the source of its supply chain and wider food integrity should be encouraged. A growing
130 body of research has already focused on the detection of adulterated food products, analytical
131 techniques and identifying vulnerable points in the food supply chain. What is not clear is the extent
132 and usage of food fraud vulnerability assessments in the food supply chain. What type of assessment
133 tools have been adopted by the food industry to mitigate food fraud? What actions are taken
134 following such assessments? Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the use of food fraud
135 vulnerability assessment tools and subsequent actions taken by the food industry.

136

137 **Methodology**

138 **Questionnaire Development**

139 The research utilised an online survey questionnaire, which was made available via SurveyMonkey®.
140 Questions were developed from the current literature (Barnett et al., 2016; DEFRA, 2015; Menozzi et
141 al. 2015; Rhodes, 2016) with the questionnaire being divided into six sections; (i) demographic
142 characteristics; (ii) level of understanding of risk of food fraud; (iii) food fraud vulnerability
143 assessments and tools used; (iv) actions taken following assessments; and (v) training.
144 A pilot study among food fraud researchers and two food manufacturers was conducted to ensure
145 the clarity and validity of the questionnaire and evaluate the time required to complete it.

146

147 **Participant Recruitment**

148 Food manufacturing companies were invited to participate in the study via email and calls for
149 participation through a number of industry networks including the Food Integrity Intelligence
150 Network (FIIN), the Federation of Bakers and the Food and Drink Federation between May and
151 August 2017. The first and second authors also visited exhibition booths at Food Ingredients Europe
152 (FIE) and Food and Drink Expo in November 2017 and April 2018 respectively, to garner further
153 participation. A total of 23 food companies responded to these approaches and nineteen food
154 manufacturers returned completed surveys.

155

156 **Results and Discussion**

157 The survey participants represented a wide cross-section of manufacturers within the food and drink
158 industry. As shown in Table 2, 36.8% of the manufacturers represented small and medium sized
159 independent food business (companies operating with less than 50 employees), 26.3% represented
160 medium sized firms with 50 – 249 employees). Whilst all of the main product categories were
161 represented in the survey (meat and fish; dairy and egg; fruits, vegetables and nuts; alcoholic drinks,
162 bakery; ready meals and sandwiches; dried foods and ingredients), 31.6% of the study population
163 classified their products as 'others', which encompassed a mixture of raw and cooked products, wet
164 and dehydrated culinary products, marinades, meals for catering services, and honey.

165

166 About 1/3 of the manufacturers reported that their food businesses had been victims of food fraud.
167 Nine of the manufacturers (just under half of those surveyed) had experience of dealing with
168 external fraud, i.e. where a business is a victim of fraud perpetrated by an external third party (e.g.
169 by supply of inferior, substituted or adulterated foods, theft etc.), whilst six food businesses
170 (approximately 1/3) reported experiences in dealing with internal food fraud. Internal fraud occurs
171 at the place of employment, either as an individual acting alone or in collaboration with the modus
172 operandi of the organisation. Internal staff have more access to processing facilities compared to

173 external staff and as they understand the controls and preventive measures in place, may be able to
174 work around them falsifying documentation if necessary (Manning and Soon, 2016). It is most likely
175 that the external fraud occurred at the suppliers, sector or wider chain level and were detected
176 before the manufacturing companies themselves became direct victims of fraud. This fits with
177 previous research, as Van Ruth et al. (2017) reported that food frauds may originate from both the
178 external or internal environment of a business. The findings however do not indicate if internal fraud
179 is more easily committed compared to external fraud. It is possible that external frauds were
180 identified and reported more frequently due to less stringent control and preventive measures
181 (Manning, 2016), increased awareness of food fraud in the supply chain and / or perceived control
182 over internal control measures. This is akin to an 'It won't happen to us' answer when people are
183 questioned about the likelihood of being affected by harm or food fraud in this case (da Cunha,
184 Stedefeldt, & de Rosso, 2014; Weinstein, 1984).

185

186 Over 40% of the manufacturers stated that their businesses have designated staff who could advise
187 on preventative and counter-fraud strategies, however, it is not known if these individuals are
188 trained counter-fraud specialists. Whilst fraud analysts and investigators are often employed in
189 banking, benefits, property claims and financial organisations, there are few reports of specialised
190 counter-fraud staff being employed within the food industry. Within the enforcement community
191 there have been moves to establish specialist teams to address food fraud and food crime. For
192 example, the Danish Veterinary and Food Agency (DVFA) employs a "Food Fraud Flying Squad"; the
193 Food and Consumer Products Safety Authority in the Netherlands have established an Intelligence
194 and Investigation Service (IOD), and in the UK the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) has been
195 established within the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in the aftermath of the horsemeat scandal. All
196 three agencies employ experts in criminal investigations, alongside individuals with the traditional
197 scientific expertise (veterinary science, microbiology, food science etc.) associated with these
198 agencies, with the aim of enabling comprehensive investigations into suspected food crime and food
199 fraud (Evershed and Temple, 2016; NVWA-IOD, 2018). In fact, the NFCU are boosting their staff
200 number from 22 to 80 to enhance their capabilities in addressing complex food crime (FSA, n.d.;
201 Ridler, 2018).

202

203 More than half of the businesses surveyed also have a specific policy on fraud prevention,
204 investigation and reporting in place. Such policies can serve as a beneficial guide for companies
205 should fraud occur as well as enabling users to take preventative actions.

206

207 Insert Table 2 here

208

209 As shown in Table 3, more than half of the businesses surveyed report using bespoke in-house tools
210 for food fraud assessment. Based on their responses, these tools were adapted from United States
211 Pharmacopeia (USP) and Campden TACCP guidelines. One organisation developed their own model
212 in line with the National Intelligence model whilst considering their historical data, information from
213 external sources and experts. Another, a cooked meat and fish products manufacturing company,
214 designed their system based on their own experience and advice from industry experts, as well as
215 utilising information from the FSA and UK Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
216 (DEFRA) websites. Slightly more than a quarter of the food businesses surveyed adopted the
217 Campden TACCP guidelines (which evaluates threats from food fraud and malicious contamination)
218 directly, whilst two companies used the SSAFE tool. No organisations reported using USP or FFISM in
219 their original formats. This may be because the companies surveyed are UK-based and so lack
220 exposure to the tools developed in the U.S. It is also possible that tools from different countries
221 collate historical fraud incidents related to the region and so best cater to the needs of the local food
222 industry. Some of the manufacturers reported using analytical authenticity tests as a form of in-
223 house assessment tool. For example, a honey processing company utilised a Unique Manuka Factor
224 (UMF) grading system, whilst a dairy and liquid egg company utilised isotope spectrometer analysis.
225 GFSI assessments of both food defence and food fraud are carried out separately unlike Campden
226 TACCP which can assess both criminal activity from fraud and malicious attack.

227

228 Insert Table 3 here

229

230 The main sources of information used by the food industry to support food fraud assessments were
231 their own internal experts, guidelines provided by the different assessment methods, food safety
232 certification bodies and professional memberships. Professional memberships such as the
233 Federation of Bakers, Food and Drink Federation, Institute of Food Science and Technology, Institute
234 of Food Technologists and the International Association for Food Protection provide networking
235 opportunities and updates to members. Networking is one of the key information and knowledge
236 sharing strategies employed by the food industry, especially in the area of open innovation (OI)
237 (Bigliardi and Galati, 2013). Similarly, the food industry can create and share intelligence of food
238 fraud incidents and mitigation strategies using these networks. For example, ESA (2018) and van
239 Ruth et al. (2017) reported that companies that participated in European Spice Association meetings
240 were warned about fraud and received an “adulteration awareness document”. Desouza et al.

241 (2005) found that organisations that do not utilise external knowledge are unable to compete in the
242 marketplace in an effective way. Other sources of information include Food Industry Intelligence
243 Network (FIIN), HorizonScan, suppliers and customers. Suppliers may be valuable sources of
244 information as they have specific knowledge of the product and there is the opportunity for
245 reciprocity in knowledge sharing between suppliers and buyers which can benefit both parties.
246 (Török et al., in press). Similarly, customers too can potentially provide information about fraud
247 incidents that have occurred. Information and knowledge sharing, together with collaborations with
248 other actors in the supply chain, may be effective ways to reduce vulnerability to food fraud.

249

250 The majority of the companies in the survey carry out food fraud assessment training i.e. how to
251 assess fraud vulnerability specific to their products and processes (79%) and internal control
252 measures (63%). Control measures are actions taken to minimise, reduce or eliminate potential
253 hazards from occurring (Wallace et al., 2011). Although the use of control measures to minimise and
254 where possible eliminate the likelihood of unintentional food safety incidents is well established
255 through the use of HACCP and pre-requisite programmes, the consideration of food fraud (i.e.
256 intentional acts committed for financial gain) does not sit within the scope of traditional HACCP-
257 based food safety management systems. Therefore, food businesses must consider additional
258 internal control measures to minimise the likelihood of food fraud. For example, control measures
259 can be currently built into product and packaging design via information systems for traceability,
260 Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID), codes, tamper evident seals, holograms and special
261 inks (Manning et al., 2016; Spink et al. 2010). Furthermore, intelligent packaging devices i.e. sensors,
262 indicators and radio frequency identification (RFID), are expanding in response to food fraud,
263 counterfeit, theft, diversion, safety, quality and reuse / recycling (Vanderroost et al., 2017a;
264 Vanderroost et al., 2017b). Other control measures specific to fraud include whistleblowing
265 guidelines (Soon and Manning, 2017), contractual requirements for suppliers (van Ruth et al. 2017),
266 employee integrity screening and ethical codes of conduct (PWC, 2016). Capacity building in
267 laboratory and analytical testing method remains crucial to ensure staff are competent and kept
268 updated with current methods.

269 Interestingly, a small number of the surveyed food businesses had staff trained in forensic
270 accounting. According to Power (2013) and Gee et al. (2014), forensic accounting has been adopted
271 as a countermeasure to fraud to fight the practice of “false” suppliers as well as fraudulent practices
272 by internal company staff (e.g. approval of false invoices, falsification delivery notes). Other flags for
273 fraud that can be identified by forensic audit include false traceability documentation, missing
274 paperwork, prices below commodity price, several similar purchases made below an authorisation

275 level, high volumes of purchases from new vendors and excessive cash receipts/payments. The “Red
276 Flags of Food Fraud” set out in the Elliott Review indicate the use of observation skills and forensic
277 accounting techniques to reduce fraud vulnerability (Jack, in Elliott Review, 2014). Traceability tests
278 and second party audits will also provide more information for focused forensic accounting. Indeed,
279 it was a recommendation of the Elliott Review (2014) that the UK government should “*support the*
280 *work of standards’ owners in developing additional audit modules for food fraud prevention and*
281 *detection incorporating forensic accountancy and mass balance checks.*”

282

283 The food businesses were also questioned on their actions if their suppliers are suspected of
284 perpetrating fraud. More than half would choose to delist their suppliers in combination with other
285 methods including thorough investigation and supplier audits. Delisting an offending supplier may
286 have a negative impact on production (e.g. the availability of ingredients) and the action is also
287 dependent on whether the suppliers were directly involved in the fraud or were victims themselves.
288 If suppliers have been victims of fraud due to lack of appropriate control measures in place, the
289 manufacturers are willing to work with them to eliminate and/or reduce fraud vulnerability (Table
290 4). The findings from this study revealed that the decision to delist suppliers was also dependent on
291 frequency of fraud i.e. if the issue occurred more than once.

292

293 Insert Table 4 here

294

295 A large proportion of the participating companies have had no non-conformances raised in external
296 audits against food fraud vulnerability clauses. The four companies that reported non-conformances
297 had either used their own fraud assessment tools or the SSAFE tool. This does not mean that other
298 tools are better in assessing vulnerability points. One must bear in mind that different tools provide
299 different functionality and is up to the company to adapt the tool accordingly i.e. adapt to own
300 product or sector, process and region. BRC Global Standard for Food Safety Issue 8 requires food
301 manufacturers to carry out a documented vulnerability assessment on food raw materials to assess
302 potential risk of adulteration or substitution (BRC Global Standards, 2018) but the methodology of
303 assessment is up to the manufacturers. The key challenge with food fraud vulnerability assessment
304 is inconsistency, as multiple tools could be used, and the scope of assessments may vary
305 (Whitworth, 2015) hence there is the risk of under or over predicting vulnerability points within the
306 assessment tools.

307

308 Food companies also reported utilising a number of strategies following food fraud risk assessment
309 (qualitative responses to an open-ended question on ‘What actions are taken by your company
310 following food fraud risk assessment?’). These include routine surveillance analysis, supplier checks,
311 site visits, traceability checks and specific full-on investigation in the case of known or suspected
312 food fraud. In fact, one of the companies successfully recalled two containers of adulterated
313 products en-route to their client and tightened their sourcing security and internal audits with their
314 suppliers. Another company suggested that end consumers (i.e. public shoppers) must be educated
315 as customers are the key drivers of safe and integrity products in the food supply chain.

316

317 The respondents were divided in terms of whether food fraud vulnerability assessments have a
318 positive or negative impact on food fraud (Table 4). Those who perceived that the tools have a
319 positive impact related this to putting an increased focus on an area that was not always considered
320 properly, raising general awareness and ensuring that customers are getting what is labelled. The
321 tools are believed to serve as an ongoing deterrent and preventative measure.

322

323 However, across the surveyed companies, there is still a level of uncertainty in terms of the impact
324 of the tools. In response to the question: ‘In your opinion, have food fraud vulnerability assessments
325 had a positive / negative impact on food fraud?’ one user was uncertain about the impact from such
326 assessment tool and commented on the questions used in fraud assessment tool:

327

328 *‘Why should we ask if the organisation owner is a celebrity? Assessments are very*
329 *subjective. Unfortunately, a box ticking exercise by staff who are unaware of suppliers’*
330 *reliability and how trustworthy they are, will be useless’.*

331

332 Threat assessments for an organisation requires one to determine if the organisation has a celebrity
333 or high-profile chief executive or proprietor (PAS 96:2017). This assessment allows one to assess for
334 likelihood of threats and/or level of vulnerability to deliberate contamination of food by malicious or
335 begrudged perpetrators against the owner. It is crucial that users understand why such assessments
336 are required.

337

338 Two of the surveyed food businesses perceived a negative impact from the assessments, as they
339 incur additional costs and may provide a bad image to the brand.

340

341 Insert Table 5 here

342

343 In general the surveyed food businesses agreed that food fraud vulnerability assessments can help
344 to ensure food integrity, deter potential fraud risk and create an anti-fraud culture (Table 5). Food
345 chain integrity covers all aspects of food chain from producers to consumers and encompasses
346 microbial and chemical food safety, authenticity, fraud and quality (Hoorfar et al., 2011). Food
347 manufacturers are one of the key actors in the chain and with appropriate control measures such as
348 use of food fraud vulnerability assessment, can reduce opportunity for fraud. According to van Ruth
349 et al. (2017), food fraud vulnerability is dependent on opportunities to commit fraud, motivations of
350 fraudsters and control measures in place, whilst Moyer et al. (2017) suggest that fraudsters are
351 unlikely to engage in illegal activity if they perceive the chance of being caught high Conducting
352 assessments allows users to identify points of vulnerability, review their control measures and as a
353 result of the ongoing assessment, this can help to reduce and/or deter fraud opportunities and
354 demotivate fraudsters from taking action. Establishing the correct ethical standards, creating
355 appropriate management support and environment for food businesses are also an important part
356 of creating an anti-fraud culture. A strong ethical standards culture will encourage employees to
357 adhere to the organisations' rules and regulations (Rae and Subramaniam, 2008) and limits the risk
358 of unethical behaviour (van Ruth et al., 2017). People are governed by the culture and environment
359 in which they operate. In fact, an unethical business culture that encourages law breaking in the
360 pursuit of profit can "normalize" fraud and reinforce longer-term fraudulent activity (Coleman, 1987;
361 Raftery and Holder, 2014).

362

363 The respondents mostly agreed that they have stronger internal controls (e.g. control measures
364 within organisation; own staff) compared to external controls (e.g. third party audits; inspections)
365 over the application of food fraud vulnerability assessment. They believed that their own staff will
366 be able to carry out the assessment and the control measures within their facilities can prevent food
367 fraud. Meanwhile, there was more uncertainty about government and external inspectors' role in
368 preventing food fraud. Previous research has revealed diminished public confidence in the
369 government and food industry following the horsemeat incident (Barnett et al., 2016; Elliott Review,
370 2014; Premanandh, 2013; Tse et al., 2016). Consumers were found to be less tolerant of uncertainty
371 due to lack of action or lack of interest from the government (Frewer et al., 2002). Although internal
372 control measures are crucial, regulatory controls are necessary to enforce food safety regulations
373 (FSA, 2018a). Some studies have demonstrated that regulatory control and official inspections help
374 to reduce food fraud (Liu, 2016; Nasreen and Ahmed 2014). The UK FSA is modernising the way food
375 businesses are regulated under the 'Regulating our Future' (ROF) programme (FSA, 2018b). A new

376 risk management approach will be introduced where food businesses doing the right thing will be
377 recognised but action will be taken against those that do not. The ROF programme is timely as it
378 needs to address the changing nature of the food industry (e.g. rise in online retailers, food delivery
379 services, private auditors), constrained enforcement resources and environmental changes with
380 preparations to leave the European Union (FSA, 2017).

381

382 There is also strong agreement to continue with the current food fraud risk assessment model and
383 the food businesses agreed that they will search for more information to support the assessment.
384 For example, information developed by the British Standards Institution such as the PAS 2017 Guide
385 to protecting and defending food and drink from deliberate attack (FSA, 2018c; PAS 96: 2017) can be
386 used by food businesses to assess potential vulnerabilities to fraud.

387

388 **Limitations and future research**

389 The small sample size and low response rate from the food industry are major limitations in the
390 study. Despite assurances of anonymity and confidentiality businesses appear reluctant to
391 communicate their actions – or lack of them – in tackling this sensitive issue. There is also a
392 possibility of social desirability bias in the responses received, as manufacturers may want to project
393 an optimistic perspective of their activities. Further insight could be obtained through interviews
394 with individual food companies to explore the benefits and challenges in using the current food
395 fraud vulnerability assessment tools. Future research should also explore why companies prefer to
396 use in-house models and whether there is a restriction in terms of time, expertise and capital to
397 subscribe to online food fraud vulnerability assessment tools? It is also worth exploring in-depth the
398 companies that have been victims of internal and/or external fraud. Van Ruth et al. (2017) indicated
399 that companies who have been victims of fraud are more likely to become indirectly involved in
400 future frauds again. In fact, repeat victimization could occur if vulnerabilities were not mitigated
401 after the first event.

402

403 **Conclusion**

404 In house food fraud vulnerability assessments were the preferred models of assessment among the
405 surveyed food businesses. Around one third of the companies had been victims of food fraud,
406 although about half of the companies have had experience in dealing with external food fraud. Food
407 manufacturers were divided about the impact of conducting food fraud vulnerability assessments.
408 Although such assessments are believed to help to raise awareness and ensure the integrity of the
409 food supply chain, some food businesses are still uncertain about the impact of food fraud

410 vulnerability assessments, with concerns raised about cost and brand reputation. Since the adoption
411 and conduct of the vulnerability assessments is fairly new, it is inevitable that the full impact remains
412 to be seen. With time and ongoing vigilance from the food industry, food fraud vulnerability
413 assessments will benefit the sector and ensure the safety and integrity of the food supply chain.
414 Looking beyond the scope of the current study, future research could investigate the relation
415 between demographic characteristics, experience in dealing with fraud, cultural differences and
416 their food fraud vulnerability assessment strategies. Longitudinal studies with food manufacturers to
417 assess the impact of such assessments will quantify the extent and type of impacts e.g. food safety,
418 public health, finance and brand reputation.

419

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425

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682 M. (in press). Fraud vulnerability in the Dutch milk supply chain: Assessments of farmers, processors
683 and retailers. Food Control, doi: doi.org/10.1016/j.foodcont.2018.08.019
684
685 Table 1. Food safety standards and definitions of food fraud and food defence

| Standards | Food fraud | Food defence | Notes |
|---|---|--|---|
| BRC Global Standard for Food Safety (Issue 8, 2018) | Documented vulnerability assessment shall be carried out on all food raw materials to assess potential risk of adulteration (Clauses 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3) | Potential for deliberate malicious contamination sources need to be risk assessed, managed and reviewed (Clauses 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3) | Food processing sites are looking at combining the food defence requirements with the requirements for Food Fraud as the methodology and principles defined in TACCP guidance document PAS96:2017 are |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| | | | similar (Leathers, 2018) |
| GFSI (2017) | Process to ensure the security of food and drink from all forms of intentional malicious attack including ideologically motivated attack leading to contamination | Deliberate and intentional substitution, addition, tampering or misrepresentation of food, food ingredients or food packaging, labelling, product information or false or misleading statements made about a product for economic gain that could impact consumer health | Essential to note that GFSI defines food fraud separately from food defence |
| PAS96:2017 | 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 | Procedures adopted to assure the security of food and drink and their supply chains from malicious and ideologically motivated attack leading to contamination or supply disruption | |
| Campden TACCP (Campden BRI, 2019; Swainson, 2019) | Systematic management of risk through the evaluation of threats, identification of vulnerabilities and implementation of controls | | Note that Spink and Moyer (2011) suggest that food defence activities are distinct from food fraud. Food defence strategies are efforts undertaken to |
| Campden VACCP (Campden BRI, 2019; Swainson, 2019) | Consider how vulnerable each point in the supply chain is to that threat of criminal/malicious activity. VACCP is an inter-related process with TACCP | | |

protect food from intentional acts of adulteration.

US FDA (2018) Effort to protect food from intentional acts of adulteration where there is an intent to cause wide scale public health harm

686

687

688 **Table 2.** Demographic characteristics of survey participants (n=19)

| Variable | Items | Frequency (%) |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Gender | Male | 11 (57.9) |
| | Female | 8 (42.1) |
| Age (years) | 18-30 | 2 (10.5) |
| | 31-40 | 6 (31.6) |
| | 41-50 | 3 (15.8) |
| | 51-60 | 5 (26.3) |
| | > 60 | 3 (15.8) |
| Education | Secondary | 3 (15.8) |
| | Tertiary | 16 (84.2) |
| Food and drink manufacturing type | Raw fish products and preparations | 1 (5.3) |
| | Fruit, vegetables and nuts | 1 (5.3) |
| | Dairy, liquid egg | 2 (10.5) |
| | Cooked meat / fish products | 1 (5.3) |
| | Ready meals and sandwiches | 1 (5.3) |
| | Alcoholic drinks and fermented brewed products | 2 (10.5) |
| | Bakery | 2 (10.5) |
| | Dried foods and ingredients | 3 (15.8) |
| | Others | 6 (31.6) |
| Number of employees | 0 – 9 | 4 (21.1) |
| | 10 – 49 | 3 (15.8) |
| | 50 – 249 | 5 (26.3) |
| | 250+ employees | 7 (36.8) |

| | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------|
| Independent / multinational company | Independent | 13 (68.4) |
| | Multinational | 6 (31.6) |
| Has the company been a victim of food fraud? | Yes | 6 (31.6) |
| | No | 11 (57.9) |
| | Uncertain | 2 (10.5) |
| I have experience dealing with internal food fraud | Yes | 6 (31.6) |
| | No | 11 (57.9) |
| | Uncertain | 2 (10.5) |
| I have experience dealing with external food fraud | Yes | 9 (47.4) |
| | No | 9 (47.4) |
| | Prefer not to say | 1 (5.3) |
| Does the company have a designated individual / fraud officer to advice on fraud incidents? | Yes | 8 (42.1) |
| | No | 10 (52.6) |
| | Uncertain | 1 (5.3) |
| Does your company have a specific policy on fraud prevention, investigation and reporting? | Yes | 10 (52.6) |
| | No | 7 (36.8) |
| | Uncertain | 2 (10.5) |

689

690

691 **Table 3.** Types of food fraud assessment tools, resources and training conducted in food businesses

| Items | Frequency (%) |
|---|---------------|
| Campden Threat and Critical Control Points | 5 (26.3) |
| United States Pharmacopeia (USP) Food Fraud Mitigation | 0 |
| Safe Supply of Affordable Food Everywhere (SSAFE) Vulnerability Assessment Tool | 2 (10.5) |
| Food Fraud Initial Screening Tool | 0 |
| In-house assessment tool (e.g. own bespoke / adapted tools) | 7 (36.8) |
| Others (e.g. product testing) | 5 (26.3) |
| *Sources of information used to support food fraud assessments | |
| Guidelines provided by assessment method | 9 (47.4) |
| Internal experts | 12 (63.2) |
| External experts | 5 (26.3) |
| Food safety certification bodies | 6 (31.6) |
| Media | 4 (21.1) |
| Food magazines | 2 (10.5) |
| Peer-reviewed journal articles | 1 (5.3) |
| Professional memberships | 6 (31.6) |

| | |
|-------------|----------|
| Academia | 3 (15.8) |
| Conferences | 5 (26.3) |
| Others | 4 (21.1) |

*Types of food fraud assessment training conducted in the company

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Food fraud vulnerability assessment | 15 (78.9) |
| Laboratory and analytical instrument training | 10 (52.6) |
| Verification of supplier training | 8 (42.1) |
| Internal control measures | 12 (63.2) |
| Forensic accounting | 2 (10.5) |
| Others | 2 (10.5) |

692 Note: * Participants can select more than one option

693

694 **Table 4.** Actions taken post vulnerability assessment or if suspicion of fraud arises

| Items | Frequency (%) |
|--|---------------|
| What are your *action(s) if there is suspicion of fraud by your suppliers: | |
| Delist the supplier | 10 (52.6) |
| Work with them to eliminate the problem | 7 (36.8) |
| Others (e.g. investigation, supplier audits) | 8 (42.1) |
| Any non-conformances raised in audits against food fraud vulnerability clauses / requirements? | |
| Yes | 4 (21.1) |
| No | 12 (63.2) |
| Uncertain | 3 (15.8) |
| In your opinion, have food fraud vulnerability assessments had a positive / negative impact on food fraud? | |
| Positive | 9 (47.4) |
| Negative | 2 (10.5) |
| Uncertain | 8 (42.1) |

695 Note: *Food businesses can select more than one option

696

697 **Table 5.** Perceptions of food fraud vulnerability assessments (1 – Strongly disagree; 5 – Strongly agree)

| Food fraud vulnerability assessment is able to: | Mean | S.D. |
|---|------|------|
| Trace origin of food | 3.47 | 1.26 |
| Verify vendor and supplier status | 3.68 | 1.16 |
| Ensure integrity of food | 4.11 | 0.99 |
| Result in safer food | 3.63 | 0.89 |
| Deter potential fraud risk | 3.89 | 0.94 |
| Detect existing fraud | 3.63 | 0.89 |
| Create anti-fraud culture | 3.74 | 0.81 |

External control measures

| | | |
|---|------|------|
| I feel confident that external staff / inspectors can prevent fraud | 3.47 | 1.12 |
| Government emphasis on fraud prevention strategies can prevent fraud | 3.26 | 1.05 |
| Internal control measures | | |
| I feel confident that our food fraud vulnerability assessment can prevent fraud | 3.79 | 0.92 |
| I have internal control measures in place to prevent food fraud | 4.00 | 0.67 |
| I feel confident my internal staff can prevent fraud | 3.89 | 0.74 |
| I intend to: | | |
| Apply food fraud vulnerability assessment (if new) | N/A | N/A |
| Continue with my current food fraud vulnerability assessment | 4.16 | 0.76 |
| Search for more information regarding food fraud vulnerability assessment | 3.84 | 0.89 |

699 Note: N/A – Not applicable as all food businesses carry out food fraud vulnerability assessments

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