



Ensuring the Integrity of the European food chain

Providing recommendations to industry for improved communication of European products to China

Food Integrity is a European funded project aimed at ensuring the integrity of the European food chain. The results of this research present recommendations on how businesses can guarantee authenticity in a way that adds net value and how they can communicate the added-value to improve consumer knowledge and trust in high quality European products.

What is food fraud?

- Food fraud is the failure to provide assurance of food authenticity, safety and quality (collectively called food integrity), and usually involves deliberately deceiving consumers to increase profit. Whilst this can reduce product quality, breach cultural or religious norms, or even compromise food safety and cause illness or harm it can also decrease price and enhance sensory quality, making products more attractive to consumers.
- There are a number of different types of food fraud, which include:
 - **Counterfeiting.** All aspects of the legitimate product and packaging are fully replicated without the consent of the legitimate producer.
 - **Adulteration.** Undeclared, and usually lower cost, ingredients are added to the finished product.
 - **Diversion.** The sale or distribution of legitimate products outside of intended markets without the consent of the legitimate producer.
 - **Over-running.** A legitimate product is made in excess of production agreements without the consent of the legitimate producer.
 - **Simulation.** An illegitimate and lower quality product is designed to look like, but not exactly copy, the legitimate product, such as slightly changing the name.
 - **Tampering.** A legitimate product and packaging are used in a fraudulent way, such as by changing the use-by date and reselling expired products.
 - **Theft.** A legitimate product is stolen and passed off as legitimately procured.

Spink & Moyer (2011)



The project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement No. 613688.

Why is it important?

- Chinese consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about the safety of locally produced food products due to a number of recent, high profile food scares.
- China is an important market for European products, which are considered as safe.
- The demand for European products make them a target for dishonest traders.
- Food fraud and food safety are interlinked in the mind of the Chinese consumer.

Recommendations

Product

- European products are perceived to be safer and more trustworthy than products locally produced or positioned as locally produced in China. The country of origin of the product should therefore be clearly displayed.
- Accreditation through third party certification bodies, such as geographic indications certification (PDO) and organic certification, were viewed favourably so products should be clearly labelled as such.
- Industry certification, such as geographical indications certification for Scotch Whisky, can help to capitalise on the country of origin of products.

Packaging

- Authenticity cues on packaging are important. Consumers have more trust in measures that are difficult to replicate, such as tamperproof seals.
- Preference for the type of authenticity cue(s) is product specific so market research should include this as an important part of product testing.
- Chinese consumers are prepared to pay a premium for trustworthy authenticity cues so authenticity and safety guarantees usually add net value to products.
- Although highlighting these measures may also help counterfeiters, regularly updating authenticity processes was thought to help industry stay one step ahead of the fraudsters, and maintain consumer trust with their efforts.

Communications

- Chinese consumers require increased information on product categories e.g. olive oil, to improve consumer confidence and contribute to brand protection.
- Consumer reassurance could be provided by professional, independent 3rd parties who could supply trusted food safety information to the public.
- Communications should serve to reassure consumers about the safety of products, in addition to the authenticity.
- Targeted communication of authenticity assurance measures would raise consumer understanding and enable them to select products that use such measures.

Further Information

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