



## Ensuring the Integrity of the European food chain

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



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**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)



## Why is it important?

- Chinese consumers are becoming increasingly concerned over food safety thanks to a number of recent, high profile food scares.
- China is an important market for European products
- **Food fraud and food safety are interlinked in the mind of the Chinese consumer**



## Facilitators to authenticity—product

- Chinese consumers were shown to have positive attitudes towards and intention to purchase authenticated food, which resulted from increased consumer trust in authenticated products.
- European produced products should **not** be positioned as being locally Chinese produced to avoid being tarnished with the same level of distrust as products produced in the domestic Chinese market.
- As European products were perceived as being safer, and more authentic than their Chinese counterparts, the country of origin of the product should be clearly displayed, especially when products are labelled in English and Mandarin. Accreditation such as PDO status, was also viewed favourably.
- Industry certification, such as geographic indications certification for Scotch Whisky, can help to capitalise on the country of origin of European products.
- European products were perceived as more expensive, reflecting their premium positioning and perceived higher quality.
- Price was not as important as other product attributes such as labels, with authenticity signs play a more important role in decision making.



## Facilitators to authenticity—packaging

- A number of authenticity cues were used by Chinese consumers to judge the authenticity of products, with cues included on a label and so physically on the product highly important for consumers.
- Important cues included security packaging such as tamper proof seals, certificates of authenticity and nutritional information. This suggests that Chinese consumers want to know what the product contains and have more trust in information measures that cannot be replicated, ensuring that their purchases have not been tampered with in any way.
- Preference for the type of authenticity cue(s) used is product specific and so market research should include this as an important part of product testing.



## Facilitators to authenticity—communication

- More direct and transparent communication was suggested by consumers as being key to aiding with, and increasing consumer trust.
- Important aspects of this included more accurate and evidence-based information, being more responsive to consumer complaints and pro-actively informing consumers about product recalls where necessary.
- Providing consumers with more information on European product categories such as olive oil, so as to increase their knowledge, will improve consumer confidence and also contribute towards brand protection.
- Professional and independent 3<sup>rd</sup> parties were identified as an important body who could reassure and supply food safety and authenticity information to the public, and were identified as being important for gaining consumer trust. There is currently a gap in the market for these.
- Concerns over food hazards and food safety were of paramount concerns to Chinese consumers, and these concerns were linked to food authenticity. Communication should therefore act to reassure consumers about the safety of products, in addition to their authenticity.
- A need for more transparent and direct communication was identified, centring around the measures companies are using to ensure authenticity of their products were preferred. 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 effort.



### Further information

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For further information about the project visit [www.foodintegrity.eu](http://www.foodintegrity.eu)



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