

TINY INGREDIENTS, MAJOR IMPLICATIONS

Product recalls are increasing, and supply chains are becoming more complex. Long supply chains with many participants and stages provide countless challenges, including contamination of foodstuffs. According to Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), most food recalls in the period between 2011 and 2020 were due to undeclared allergens and microbial contamination.

Practices such as keeping a keen eye on what's happening overseas, with food scares in particular, can help local stakeholders proactively identify developing challenges and address them before they become issues in Australia. To ensure preparation for adverse events, organisations should also think about risk from a likelihood perspective, conduct threats and vulnerabilities assessments, and practice and prepare for risk.

Even in an allergen-free manufacturing environment, a small error in the supply chain can have major implications

Michael Lincoln from Liberty Specialty Markets Australia reported, "Recently a client who operates an allergen-free manufacturing plant in Victoria sustained an estimated financial loss of more than \$375,000 as a result of a simple ingredient contamination, that was out of their control.

"In this case, the medium sized manufacturer is dedicated to the production of gluten, dairy and nut free baking mixes, suitable for consumption by people with various allergies and dietary intolerances.

"Needless to say, the manufacturer takes its internal systems and processes very seriously to ensure they maintain an allergen-free manufacturing environment. Unfortunately, there was a major failure on the part of one of the manufacturer's trusted suppliers. That supplier provided the manufacturer with baking powder. Testing data (the costs of which were borne by the manufacturer) clearly traced the end allergen to a defective batch of baking powder."

"Through no fault of the baking goods manufacturer, the baking



powder was contaminated with casein, a potential allergen, and was thus not declared as an ingredient on the packaging and labelling. By the time the contamination was discovered, the faulty raw material had been used in an array of cake mixes and other products," Lincoln said.

Avoid major consequences through risk management

Peter McGee from Victual, a risk and insurance organisation, provided his expertise.

"Prevention is always better than the cure. A robust vendor assurance program, which includes good contractual protections, and some assurance that suppliers have appropriate insurance in place, will be the best way to prevent supplier errors having an impact on your business and your bottom line.

"At the same time, being ready for a recall is also crucial. It is imperative that all members of the recall team understand recall processes and have a working knowledge of recall hazards

relevant to your business. This might include allergens, malicious product tamper or labelling. A structured training program will ensure your staff have the knowledge required and are prepared to respond," McGee said.

Working closely with FSANZ, the notification workflow in GS1 Australia's Recall platform is aligned with the FSANZ Recall Report. FSANZ receives all necessary information required when a recall is submitted using Recall.

Post recall reports are also generated in Recall and accurately reflect FSANZ versions of the Interim and Final reports.

For more information about GS1 Australia Recall and how it can help your organisation, visit www.gs1au.org/recall or scan the QR code.

