

Food Product Recall Guidance

In July, supermarket shelves steered clear of frozen vegetables after Greenyard Frozen UK, a major fruit and vegetable supplier, withdrew 43 of their sweet corn-based products. The product recall came to light following an [announcement](#) from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) that the frozen vegetables may be contaminated with *listeria monocytogenes*, a bacteria that can cause a fatal illness known as listeriosis.

You never know when a deadly contamination or other disaster will force your organisation to endure the consequences of a food product recall. However, you can prepare by understanding potential reasons for a recall, enforcing proper prevention tactics, generating a response plan and purchasing robust cover.

Reasons for a Food Recall

1. Contamination

- *Pathogens*—Pathogen-related recalls arise when bacteria or viruses find their way into the product. This typically occurs as a result of poor hygiene practices during the manufacturing process and can cause serious health complications, such as salmonella.
- *Physical*—This form of contamination occurs when a foreign object ends up within the food, typically as a result of human error in production. Contaminants can include metal, plastic or wood, which create digestive hazards.
- *Environmental*—Often, food suppliers and manufacturers use chemicals in the production process. However, environmental contaminants, such as insecticide, can be extremely dangerous if they actually make their way into the food.

2. Undeclared Allergens or Ingredients

- *Cross-contamination*—Many food production lines are responsible for generating multiple products. As a result, some products may contain traces of ingredients found in other products from the same facility. Common cross-contaminants include ingredients people have allergies to, such as nuts. This is an issue when manufacturers fail to include the potential for cross-contamination on product labels, risking allergic reactions from uninformed consumers.

You never know when a deadly contamination or disaster will force your organisation to endure the consequences of a recall. Be prepared with these measures.

- *Chemicals*—Sometimes, chemicals arise as a by-product of food production. For instance, sulphite is a common chemical used as a preservative that can appear in food, such as jams, tinned vegetables and dried fruit. This can be problematic if manufacturers fail to list such chemicals as ingredients in their products, as people may have sensitivities to them.

Proper Prevention Tactics

There are several ways you can help prevent recalls:

- **Rely on trusted sources**—A major aspect of preventing product recalls is making sure your raw materials and ingredients come from trustworthy suppliers. Before doing business with a source, ask if they are registered with the local enforcement

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authority, possess proper certification and have a routine for ensuring their materials or ingredients comply with standards or related legislation.

- **Utilise assurance schemes**—Food assurance schemes allow manufacturers to guarantee that the ingredients or raw materials provided by suppliers are produced to specific standards, ensuring food quality and safety. For example, eggs that possess The British Lion [symbol](#) come with a guarantee that each mother hen received a vaccination against salmonella. For more information on assurance schemes, click [here](#).
- **Enforce a food safety management system**—As a manufacturer, it is vital to identify potential food safety issues within your operations and document what measures your organisation has taken to address any potential issues. Enforce a system that conforms to industry-recognised food safety management standards, such as the [British Retail Consortium Standard – Food](#). Your system should incorporate the [Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point](#), including specific records that demonstrate the actions your organisation has taken to follow proper food safety precautions.
- **Get help from your local authority**—It is important to develop a strong relationship with your local authority so that you may look to them as an aid in helping reinforce food safety laws, as well as provide advice on compliance practices.

Creating a Response Plan

Despite prevention measures, there is always a chance that a recall will still happen. Prepare yourself with a response plan that includes the following guidelines:

- **Stay informed**—Upon hearing of a reason for a recall, gather and record all necessary information surrounding the problem. In addition, continue communicating with all parties involved in the recall throughout the process.
- **Tell the authorities**—As soon as you understand the problem, inform the proper authorities, such as the FSA and your local authority.

- **Get rid of the ingredient and product**—Once you know which ingredient or material is responsible for the problem, stop production of anything including the ingredient or material, eliminate it from storage and prevent products that contain it from further distribution.
- **Stop selling product immediately**—As soon as you are aware of the recall, stop selling the product. Inform clients and customers immediately.
- **Ensure your organisation has traceability**—You are legally required to be able to identify your supplies and which products you have supplied businesses. Be sure to have proper traceability on all your products by saving invoices and receipts related to the production of your products, as well as documentation on which suppliers you purchased which ingredients or materials from. To assess your traceability, ask the following:
 - How useful are your traceability records?
 - How long are your records stored?
 - Are traceability records readily available?
 - In the event of an incident, would you be able to easily narrow down the problem to the affected batch or batches?

Purchasing Robust Cover

In addition to proper protective and response measures, provide your organisation with ultimate peace of mind by purchasing **product recall insurance**, which offers protection against the following:

- Building, equipment and product correction
- Loss of future sales
- Investigation, labour and product disposal
- Brand and reputation protection

For more information, contact **Crendon Insurance Brokers Ltd** today.