



FFI Report

Understanding the Risk of Document Fraud in the Food Supply Chain: Preliminary Findings from the Food Document Fraud Survey

Roy Fenoff, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Criminal Justice,
The Citadel

To participate in the
Food Document Fraud Survey:
www.surveymonkey.com/r/FoodDocument

John W. Spink, PhD
Director & Assistant Professor, MSU



Food fraud is a global problem that can have devastating economic effects and poses considerable risks to public health, safety, and food security. While prevention is the key to alleviating it, the risks must be identified, and the fraud opportunities must be reduced. One such risk is document fraud. However, our understanding of this problem in the food supply chain is limited. The purpose of this backgrounder is to introduce you to the document fraud concept and highlight the preliminary findings resulting from the Food Document Fraud Survey.

The Food Document Fraud Survey

As a first step to understanding the risks associated with documents used by the food industry, a survey was created and distributed among industry professionals. The Food Document Fraud survey explores the food industry's perception of document fraud. It aims to identify the kinds of documents commonly used and the ones most frequently altered, counterfeited, or forged. In the following section, we present some of our preliminary findings.

Preliminary Findings

Types of Documents Encountered

The study participants identified 35 different documents that they deal with on a regular basis. Of these, the five most reported were: Certificate Of Analysis (56%), credence attribute statements or certifications (46%), Bills of Lading (22%), laboratory analysis test results (22%), and import and export documents (16%).



Concern for, and Experience with, Document Fraud

While 86% of the study participants reported being concerned about altered, counterfeit, or forged documents entering their organization, only 44% had encountered an altered or fake document. The other 56% had either not encountered an altered or fake document (36%) or were unsure (20%).

Detection Capacity and Training Needs

When asked about their organization's capacity to identify and evaluate suspicious documents, only 35% of the study participants reported having a process in place to identify suspicious documents. Although a majority of the study participants did not know if their organization had a document examiner or consultant on retainer, 28% of the participants reported having a document expert available. Regarding prevention programs, a majority of the study participants reported that their organization did not have a document prevention program in place (57%). However, 90% of participants were interested in learning more about document fraud, with 72% interested in starting a document fraud prevention program.

Summary

Food fraud is a global crime problem carried out in numerous ways, and document fraud may be one of the easiest ways for food fraudsters to operate undetected. Therefore, the first step in prevention and response is understanding the types of documents commonly used by the food industry and identifying those targeted by the fraudsters. The results of this survey will assist in the development of further research and the establishment of training programs related to document fraud and its prevention.

Roy Fenoff, Ph.D., D-BFDE is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at The Military College of South Carolina (The Citadel). Dr. Fenoff is also a Board-Certified Forensic Document Examiner and member of the Food Fraud Prevention Think Tank.

John Spink, Ph.D., is the Director of the Food Fraud Prevention Think Tank LLC and the Food Fraud Prevention Academy. He is also an Assistant Professor in the Department of Supply Chain Management at Michigan State University.

The Food Fraud Prevention Academy, within the Food Fraud Prevention Think Tank LLC, is an interdisciplinary research, education, and outreach organization. We focus on all types of fraud that can contribute to public health and economic vulnerabilities and threats. These include adulteration, misbranding, tampering, overruns or licensee fraud, theft, diversion, simulation, and counterfeiting.

Our work is accomplished through collaboration among stakeholders from across industry, agencies, associations, and other academics. Through the support of public/private partnerships, our mission is to reduce the extremely interdisciplinary and complex food supply chain vulnerability.

For more information and opportunities to collaborate, please contact Dr. John Spink, Director of the Food Fraud Prevention Think Tank, at JohnSpink@FoodFraudPreventionThinkTank.com. Additional information can also be found at www.FoodFraudPrevention.com.