



Summary Report on the Workshop: Towards Collaborative Leadership to Tackle Food Fraud (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Oct 28th 2018)

The Workshop “Towards Collaborative Leadership to Tackle Food Fraud” was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) as part of the 12th meeting of the Dubai International Food Safety Conference (DIFSC2018). This workshop is part of the workshop series “Global Understanding of Food Fraud (GUFF)” which were initiated in Quebec City in April 2017, followed by a second event held in Beijing in October 2017.

The Dubai meeting took place on the heels of discussions on Food Fraud, at the Codex Alimentarius Commission, in particular at the CAC41 meeting (2-7 July 2018) as well as the Codex Committee on Food Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) held in Brisbane Australia on 22-26 October 2018.

The Objectives of the Dubai event included the discussion of the latest developments of global efforts to address Food Fraud in a concerted fashion, in particular:

- Current and future considerations of the development of food fraud regulatory policies (to address prevention, mitigation and to deter food crime),
- Efforts to develop validated and harmonized food fraud prevention tools to be applied by food industry
- Progress towards the development of Standard Method Performance Requirements (SMPRs) for non-targeted testing under the auspices of the Food Fraud Taskforce of the Association of Official Analytical Communities (AOAC) International

Over 70 participants from industry, government organizations, international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) and academic institutions contributed with introductory presentations reviewing current efforts and setting the scene for subsequent discussions.

Updates were provided on:

- the latest progress, accomplishments and future directions of the Global Alliance on Food Crime by Andy Morling, United Kingdom Food Standards Agency (UK FSA);
- recent actions developed and pursued by food regulators with emphasis on preventive approaches, in Europe and North America by Pamela Byrne, Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and Ryan Newkirk, United States Food and Drug Administration (US FDA);
- actions and future considerations by FAO with emphasis on tailored approaches and indicators for developing countries by Renata Clarke (FAO);
- the landscape of industry action to address food fraud and the need for updated strategies, tools and approaches to anticipate, prevent and manage food fraud across the supply chain, by Monique Pellegrino, Danone Food Safety Centre, Paris, France and Robert Baker, Mars Global Food Safety Centre, Beijing, People’s Republic of China;
- the latest in the development and standardization of analytical methods respectively by Connor Black, Queens’ University, Belfast, United Kingdom and John Szpylka, Merieux NutriSciences, AOAC INTERNATIONAL along with Ron Johnson, Past President, AOAC INTERNATIONAL.

Three (3) breakout sessions were organized to support brainstorming and the development of recommendations on the workshop themes.

Shaping a future direction for food regulatory policy to address food fraud:

Discussions during this session centered on reviewing current food regulatory practices to address food fraud, including the progress made and / or to be considered by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and in particular the Codex Committee on Food Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) to develop consistent guidance for regulators and industry, as well as to discuss current efforts of the Global Coalition on Food Crime which was recently created amongst select food regulators.

Workshop participants recommended:

- to support industry in adopting prevention measures in the form of guidance to conduct vulnerability assessments or similar approaches with a possible focus on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- to develop collaborative mechanisms with industry, possibly in the form of an Industry/Regulators' network, to work towards:
 - o data gathering for implementation of predictive approaches, impact assessments and to ascertain authenticity of targeted ingredients and food products
 - o dissemination of models to conduct vulnerability assessments
 - o training and awareness-raising efforts amongst all actors of the food supply chain
- to review the legislative and regulatory arsenal available to food regulators, including deterring provisions in food laws and regulations that aim to prevent food fraud and/or to address its occurrence
- to recommend a common direction to be pursued by food regulators in addressing food fraud, through consistent guidance to industry and effective enforcement mechanisms. Such guidance could be provided through the work being carried out under the auspices of CCFICS, which could move beyond discussions of definitions and the review of current Codex provisions pertaining to food fraud
- to mobilize resources within the International Network of Food Safety Authorities (INFOSAN), which could be used as a resource to track, collect and disseminate trusted information on food fraud incidents reported and analyzed internationally.

Supporting Consensus Guidance to Industry on Food Fraud Prevention and Mitigation Tools:

A review of existing guidance and associated tools developed by and destined for industry served as a starting point for discussions held at this session. The review focused on the suitability of such guidance and the associated measures, their practical application, their accessibility and their effectiveness.

Discussions at this session addressed the issue of availability of databases that incorporate information on food fraud incidents and support vulnerability and impact assessments. Participants called for a common approach and mobilization of resources to develop multilingual databases that track and collect data on food fraud incidents. Consideration should be made to enable accessibility to these databases across the supply chain, with emphasis on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). In the context of conducting Vulnerability Assessments (VAs), which is the most common preventive measure adopted and carried out by industry, participants identified the need for more training to be provided across the supply chain, with a focus on suppliers' audits. The multiplication of guidance to industry in this regard was discussed and identified as an impediment for the possible propagation of best practices amongst industry members. This session was also designed to offer the opportunity for regulators and industry stakeholders to interact and share views on priorities and collective measures that need to be recommended for future collaborative action. As a result, a proposed path forward was suggested and workshop participants recommended:

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- That efforts be made towards better clarity on the availability of data sources and their accessibility with the possibility to aim for more harmonization and integration of data formats;
- That a standardized approach to applying Vulnerability Assessments be targeted as part of a collective and collaborative effort amongst the stakeholder community;
- That Vulnerability Assessments be considered for the development of a consensus document or set of documents, gathering best practices, documented through experience gained by industry and guidance from regulators;
- That achieving the consensus and internationally acceptable guidance to prevent and manage food fraud be achieved through convening an **Expert Consultation** under the auspices of FAO/WHO, leveraging existing expertise and the momentum created through this series of workshop and other initiatives for international and multi-stakeholder collaboration;
- That the resulting consensus guidance from multi-stakeholder collaboration at the international level serve to underpin efforts of standardization under CCFICS/Codex;
- That efforts be made to pool resources and data sources in support of intelligence gathering and enabling the availability of the needed (and accessible) predictive tools (e.g., databases documenting incidents, predictive software and programs etc..) to conduct Vulnerability Assessments, according to the guidance adopted through consensus, as a result of multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration at the international level
- That resources be pooled to support education and awareness of both consumers (to prevent food purchases from illegal and doubtful channels) and industry (to propagate food fraud prevention and mitigation measures across the supply chain) alike.
- That more data gathering and information sharing be undertaken to fill data gaps and document food legislative and regulatory measures associated with food fraud prevention and mitigation, food fraud case studies: their occurrence, root-cause analysis and learnings from their management, industry practices from the application of VAs, supplier verification and management, impact assessments, and consumer education campaigns undertaken by public and private partners to enhance awareness of consumers and industry players (in particular smaller actors) of food fraud and its consequences.
- That a common approach be attempted for communicating risks associated with food fraud, with a possible consistent message at the global level, including busting myths associated with inaccurate food fraud incidents and hoaxes, and with the possible development of partnerships between regulators and industry to achieve a coordinated communication approach.

Supporting Standardization Efforts of Analytical Methods Used in the Context of Food Fraud Prevention, under the auspices of AOAC International:

This session follows the decision made by AOAC International to integrate the activities of the AOAC Special Taskforce on Food Fraud, as part of its regular initiatives and to prioritize action in relation with guidance and standardization of non-targeted testing.

It aimed at contributing to the documentation of methods needs to prevent and address food fraud. Discussion among stakeholders focused on what needed to be carried out, before validation of non-targeted testing methods, their experience in using such methods for food fraud prevention and considerations around the possible development of Standard Method Performance Requirements or SMPRs for non-targeted testing methods.

Experts contributing to these discussions recommended that:

- “fit-for purpose” be better defined for non-targeted testing methods considering: critical limits of detection, validation requirements, costs, effectiveness of implementation at a given stage of food fraud management for a targeted food commodity;
- SMPRs be developed for non-targeted testing methods, depending on the fit for purpose agreed-upon, to help build confidence in method validation approaches and create consistency to such processes.
- Efforts be devoted to develop reference material for the food commodities targeted by standardization through the process of establishing SMPRs. Such material and its availability are essential for global harmonization of analytical methods that are set to discriminate between deliberate fraud incident from non-deliberate occurrence or contamination.
- Efforts be made to promote accessibility to non-targeted methods of authenticity testing, as well as associated data, which are in several instances deemed proprietary.

Overall Workshop Conclusions and Recommendations:

The workshop enabled an invaluable opportunity for the stakeholder community to interact, review current developments and efforts related to the prevention and management of food fraud, develop a momentum for collaborative efforts and a roadmap to achieve such collaborations:

- The food regulatory community acknowledged current limitations in the arsenal of tools available to them, to combat food fraud and agreed to conduct and share a review of legal and regulatory frameworks associated with food fraud management;
- Food regulators, industry and academic stakeholders called for the need to create a safe space for information sharing amongst them, about food fraud incidents and their analysis as well as to develop joint efforts for communication to consumers about such incidents, with an emphasis on countering hoaxes and busting myths associated with false incidents.
- There was a unanimous support to structure multi-stakeholder collaborative efforts at the global level, through the set-up of an Expert Consultation to be convened under the auspices of FAO/WHO with the objectives to harness the technical developments related to prevention and management of food fraud. This forum would discuss and offer solutions to:
 - o the availability, accessibility and dissemination of databases capturing food fraud incidents and their analysis
 - o the development and availability of predictive tools and impact assessment methods that are needed for food fraud prevention
 - o the development of the foundations for a consensus guidance document to industry to address food fraud with the relevant preventive controls, with an emphasis on their applicability to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs);
 - o the development of guidance to regulators to achieve improved consistency in food regulatory provisions associated with food fraud management; and
 - o the identification and possible development of education and training material for industry actors, at various stages of the supply chain and with an emphasis on smaller operators.
- There was agreement to support to current efforts initiated out by AOAC International towards standardization of food authenticity assurance methods, in particular non-targeted testing methods that can become part of food fraud prevention and/or early prevention approaches.

All gathered stakeholders agreed to maintain the momentum of the spirit of collaboration and the community created through the GUFF workshop series with the need to follow-up on the implementation of the suggestions and recommendations developed as a result of these events and the associated multi-stakeholder engagement opportunities they enabled.