

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE GLOBAL FOOD SAFETY CONFERENCE 2010: 3 – 5 FEBRUARY 2010 – WASHINGTON DC, USA

WEDNESDAY 3RD FEBRUARY – PLENARY SESSIONS

Welcome address – Connecting the pieces

Jean-Marc Saubade, Managing Director, The Consumer Goods Forum

Leslie Sarasin, CEO, Food Marketing Institute (FMI)

Pamela Bailey, President and CEO, Grocery Manufacturers' Association (GMA)

In welcoming a record-breaking 675 delegates from 39 countries to the conference, The Consumer Goods Forum managing director Jean-Marc Saubade said consumer confidence had been shaken the world over, following a series of high-profile food safety incidents. The industry must work collectively to restore confidence and ensure that all consumers can exercise their right to buy and consume safe food. “We all have a duty to work together on a non-competitive basis to deliver this. It is imperative to join up the dots: between farm and fork; between science, industry and regulators; between standards, auditors and suppliers ...The industry will speak as one voice.” His call for collaboration was backed up by Leslie Sarasin and Pamela Bailey, who pledged stronger collaboration between the three trade bodies to drive progress via the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), which The Forum manages.



The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) – A Global Food Safety Framework for the 21st Century

JP Suarez, GFSI Board Chairman; Senior Vice President and General Counsel, International Division, Wal-Mart Stores

JP Suarez recalled the launch of GFSI, in 2000. Its aim was to restore consumer trust in the safety of food sold in retail outlets, while making the supply chain safer through continuous improvement and building in more cost-efficiency. Ten years on, food safety is still top of mind among industry CEOs and consumer alike. If anything, the problem has intensified as global supply chains have expanded and it becomes harder for retailers to control every touch point. He stressed that GFSI was not a standard in itself, but rather it provides the agreed food safety benchmark against which standards can be compared. Benchmarking means that once a company is certified against any GFSI-approved standard, it can be accepted anywhere. However, Suarez warned that GFSI was only as good as its participants. The initiative should not be an expensive luxury that only the biggest companies can afford. “We need to reach the small suppliers and figure out how to make GFSI relevant [to them],” he said.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food Safety Challenges and Solutions – Public and Private Collaboration Needed to Achieve a Safer Food Supply

Marion Nestle Professor of Nutrition and Food Studies at New York University and author of *Safe Food – The Politics of Food Safety*

In recent years, the US has seen an extraordinary series of outbreaks of food borne illness and recalls. The escalating problem causes Marion Nestle to conclude: “We don’t have a food safety system. We have a pseudo system” based on laws written in 1906. Part of the problem, Nestle says, is the division of tasks – and funding – between two distinct agencies, the FDA and the USDA. Nestle is an outspoken advocate of a single food safety agency in the US.



It is inappropriate to shift responsibility for food safety onto consumers, Nestle says. While acknowledging that consumer education about cooking and food storage should improve, Nestle said that to focus on consumers as the weak link in the supply chain was to ignore the fact that most of the recent outbreaks of food borne illness in the US came from pre-cooked, fresh or ready-to-eat products. “It’s not the consumer’s fault,” Nestle told the conference. “They need safe food to begin with.” However, when it comes to standards, Nestle believes voluntary best practice is ineffective: “No one wants to go first. That’s why we need legislation.” Even so, the two greatest food safety hazards, Marion Nestle claims, are “having too much or not enough”.

Mapping compliance in International Supply Chains & Regulatory Effectiveness

Lise Korsten, Professor and Plant Pathologist at the University of Pretoria, South Africa

The African continent presents significant challenges when it comes to ensuring safety in the international food supply chain. Lise Korsten holds that Africa is not yet a “true equal trading partner”, due to barriers such as lack of finance, infrastructure, capacity and lack of representation on collaborative platforms such as Codex Alimentarius and GFSI. A key problem is ensuring that food produced for domestic consumption is as safe and wholesome as that produced for export. Korsten holds that it is a governmental responsibility to legislate and enforce. The adoption of voluntary standards, however, has made a difference – ten years ago, farmers were unaware of the dangers of pathogens such as E. Coli and how to avoid contamination, whereas today that knowledge is widely shared. Korsten’s team has mapped a variety of product supply chains and linked each stage to their relative standards and regulatory requirements. The results show a multiplicity of standards and requirements: standards have evolved at different speeds, with different purposes, with little interaction. Government departments follow a “typical pattern” and operate in discrete silos. In addition, auditor competence is a weak link in the chain.

Pillars of an effective food control system

- Food legislation
- Food control
- Regulation
- Testing
- Awareness (communication, education, training)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business Case: the Value of Third-Party Certification

Johann Züblin, Head of Standards and Social Compliance, Migros, Switzerland

With private label products making up 90% of its assortment, Migros sees itself not only as a retailer but as “Switzerland’s largest food manufacturer”. As such, the retailer was a founding member of GFSI and demands that all its food suppliers be certified against a GFSI-recognised standard. Suppliers involved in primary production must be certified against GlobalGAP or SQF. Manufacturers and processors involved in what Migros terms the “transforming industry” are asked for GFSI standards. The distribution stage is controlled by HACCP. However, “good consumer practice is the biggest hazard of all,” Züblin says. Third-party auditing brings higher efficiency and lower costs for Migros: its internal audit team was dissolved and replaced with two food inspectors, with 90% cost savings. For a typical SME supplier, 13 audits were reduced to 3 with an annual cost saving of USD 45,000. While the private standards remain unrecognised by regulatory authorities, Migros claims that, today, GFSI-recognised suppliers carry a lower risk rating and are subject to fewer audits. Since the public sector resources are limited, they focus on higher risks, Züblin claims. In real terms, when Migros visits a supplier, “we don’t have to talk about food safety issues, we can talk about new products”.



Food Safety Challenges in China – Perceptions and Strategies

Junshi Chen, Professor and Fellow in Nutrition and Food Safety, Centre for Disease Control & Prevention, China



The rapid spread of supermarkets in China has been good for food safety, according to Junshi Chen. He said that, despite “some outstanding incidents,” food safety as a whole had improved in China. This is thanks partly to new actions taken by the government – such as research and development investment, new tougher legislation and the development of a single mandatory food safety system, which will soon be implemented. But it was also partly due to the rapid development of modern retail. The expansion of supermarkets in China was to be encouraged, Chen said: “It has been a good thing for food safety.” However, China’s problem is rooted in the sheer volume of very small producers who slip through the government net and cannot be adequately controlled. “In the [official] documents they may say that they are exporting bicycles, but really it is food, or pet food,” Chen said. In this context, ethics and honesty present a challenge. When foreign companies are assessing the risk of sourcing from a Chinese supplier, they should insist on government certificates, Chen said. However, Chinese government assurances alone are not enough. Businesses must also cultivate their own sources of information within China, by working with a partner, because “within China, people know very well if a source is good.”



Wednesday 4th February: The Official Cocktail and Dinner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THURSDAY 4TH FEBRUARY – PARALLEL SESSIONS

1. Private vs. Public Food Safety Efforts

Safe food is a shared accountability between governments and companies. The panel showed a growing understanding of how both the private and public sectors manage food safety and develop policy. The huge scale of the public effort is not always evident, however. But Kevin McKinley, Deputy Secretary General, ISO pointed out that there are 18,500 standards and 700 committees within the ISO framework: “We provide a bridge between multiple stakeholders and governments. I want a discussion about the opportunity to improve implementation rather than to debate our past differences.” Karen Hulebak, Chair of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Chief Scientist, Office of Food Safety, USDA agreed: “The aim of safe food is important – it’s not the standard that matters – it’s how it is put into place”. Kevin Edwards, US Food Business Development Manager for SGS described a case study on third-party certification in shrimp aquaculture, in partnership with the US FDA: “We used the GFSI Guidance document to help us with the development of the project and supported the FDA as they learnt about the process.”



2. Getting the Most out of Food Safety Audits

Consumers around the world are showing concern as a series of high profile food safety failures are reducing their confidence in the food industry’s ability to deliver safe food. Food safety auditing can provide one of the solutions. The Global Food Safety Initiative has been facilitating a discussion between a network of global experts; this session showcased a range of views on the challenges. Auditors, retailers and restaurant chains shared their policies, their experience and their learning.

Cory Hedman, Director for Food Safety and Quality for Delhaize, America, underlined the challenge inherent in getting the best return on store audits. He stressed the cultural element of the retail environment, where an audit can be a very intimidating process. The foundation of success is in training. “People generally want to do what’s right – they just don’t always know the right thing to do,” Hedman said. He also emphasised the importance of listening. “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” This theme was shared by speakers from Lloyds Register, McDonalds, Publix Super Markets and Darden who proposed that recognition of people’s excellence whether in a store or in the supply chain helps get a return for investment in auditing.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Xiaowei Shi, director general of the China National Council for Certification and Accreditation appealed for concrete collaborative action: “When it comes to global food safety – we must not be antagonistic – we need to have more trust in each other. Whether it’s with the growers, the processors, the food service sector or the retailers, we need a common approach. Let’s take action, not just talk, and let’s do it all together.”

3. Food Safety and Water in a Sustainable World

Populations are increasing, raising demand for water. At the same time, climate change is leading to reduced supply. The situation raises concerns over the source and quality of water and emerging contaminants. The food industry is under pressure to minimise its use of water in both agriculture and in processing, while there is increasing concern over waste water discharges. Carletta Ooton, Chief Quality Officer at the Coca-Cola Company, said that without sustainable communities, our business cannot be sustainable. Coca-Cola’s water goal is to “safely return to communities and nature an amount of water equivalent to that used in all of our beverages and their production”. It aims to do this via a 20% improvement in water efficiency by 2012, by alignment with global wastewater treatment standards, which require the return of all water used in its manufacturing processes in a form that supports aquatic life by the end of 2010. It will also “expand its support” of healthy watersheds and sustainable community water programmes, to balance the water used in its drinks. To this end, the Coca-Cola Company has agreed a multi-year partnership with environmental NGO WWF.



4. GFSI Global Markets Toolkit – Solutions for Less Developed Businesses

The session showcased collaborative work in progress between the public and private sectors to further food safety efforts in developing markets. There was consensus that, while international organizations are primarily engaged in the use of public standards, private standards can also play a complementary role in ensuring the effective management of food safety for smaller or less developed businesses. Currently small suppliers have to fight against a large range of requirements, certification and high complexity. The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) established a Technical working group two years ago to develop a ‘toolkit’ that outlines the technical competency requirements for individuals employed by small and/or less developed businesses, in order to guide small suppliers through a continuous improvement process and give them access to local markets and new trade opportunities over time. This toolkit will be presented at the Global Food Safety Conference in London, 16th - 18th February 2011. Pilot projects are currently being carried out in several countries to test the practical implementation of the toolkit.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

5. The Global Social Compliance Programme

- 1000 codes of conduct and implementation systems (World Bank 2004)
- 158,000,000 children aged 5-14 in work today (UNICEF 2009)
- 614,200,000 people work “excessively” long hours (ILO 2007)

Presenting these figures, Terry Babbs demonstrated the scale of the problem facing companies today in international supply chains. As Groups Ethical Trading Director for Tesco, Terry Babbs’s role is to underpin the company’s responsible trading policies. Tesco, like the 29 other companies which have formed the Global Social Compliance Programme, needs to demonstrate that it is delivering on its public commitments to ethical sourcing as well delivering growth. “We’re only as good as our suppliers”, he explained, noting that Tesco wants to form lasting relationships with suppliers who share the company’s values. A genuine partnership is the goal rather than a purely transactional relationship.



Faced with this globally widespread complexity, GSCP’s aim is to unravel the intermeshed strands of compliance systems and initiatives and to create the circumstances that will promote convergence. Supplying companies today have to deal with as many as 30 or 40 audits in one year, a situation Babbs dismissed as “a nonsense”. GSCP, being business-driven and open source, is building a set of reference tools which will enable existing systems and initiatives to benchmark themselves and draw upon agreed best practice. The programme’s ultimate goal is to concentrate on fixing the problems through remediation. This must be based on the solid foundations of commonly-accepted standards to enable stronger collaborative efforts in training and capacity building.

Although it is business-driven, civil society oversight is well and truly integrated into the Programme through its governance structure which includes a heavyweight Advisory Board of internationally recognized figures from unions, NGOs and international organisations. This Advisory Board has open access to all of the programme’s discussions and output.

In this session one question which was underlined was the problem of auditor competence and methodology, illustrated by examples drawn from suppliers in India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Building on this, Babbs also asked the question of the viability of a compliance-based framework. Compliance is necessary but real change needs to be based on shared values and the right incentives to change behaviour while respecting cultural differences – not only in supplying companies but among those businesses that source from global supply chains too.

6. Getting Most out of Micro Testing

Increasingly complex supply chains have greatly increased the challenges associated with monitoring food processing in the 21st century. Public attention to microbiological hazards has led food safety experts in the food industry to tighten its efforts in relation to microbial testing. In a session entitled “Getting the most out of Micro Testing”, speakers came together to highlight the need for major collaborative efforts among industry, public health, regulatory organizations and other public sector companies to expand the food safety focus to all parts of the supply chain, facilitating the elimination of pathogens through the implementation of HACCP programmes, prerequisite programmes, and by placing more focus on process rather than product microbiological testing to verify food process controls. To improve efficiency in the analysis of results, users of product microbiological test results should examine data trends over time to better assess process controls, rather than just for each lot of product tested. The application of Food Safety Objectives (FSO) provides a more scientific or risk-based approach for using microbiological criteria to produce safe food products and better assure public health.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

7. Optimising in-store hygiene

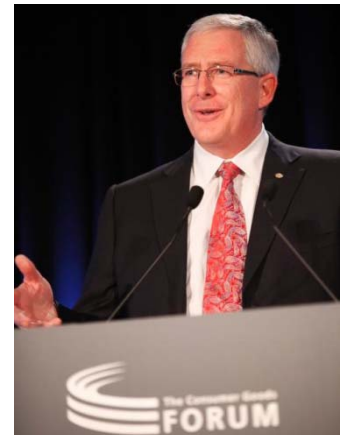


Shoppers faced with recession feel store hygiene is less important than price, according to a survey of shopper attitudes published by the Food Marketing Institute (FMI). FMI Group Vice President for Food Safety Jill Hollingsworth said that 75% of shoppers in 2006 had ranked “a clean, neat store” as “very important” in determining their choice of principal grocery store, while 69% had chosen price. By 2009, however, the situation had reversed, with price becoming the primary driver of choice. “Shoppers shouldn’t have to make a trade-off,” Hollingsworth said. “A clean, sanitary store goes hand in hand with food safety.” During the session, speakers from Wegmans and Safeway detailed their approach to food safety in stores. The key was sponsorship and commitment to a food safety culture at the top of the organisation. The other essential pillar was training and motivating staff to adopt correct practices. “Your associates have to do it because they want to,” said

Tom Ford, of sanitation provider Ecolab.

8. Emerging Issues in Food Safety – Where Will You Be in 2020?

The food industry is not only very complex but is also working at full capacity. Predictions aren’t easy and the effects of food safety issues are amplified greatly. Looking into the future is always a part of the Global Food Safety Conference. On the closing afternoon a session looked at the results of a global survey developed by GFSI partner, Diversey in collaboration with other industry experts, such as Cornell University, the World Bank and NSF-CMi and the Consumer Goods Forum. The survey response from almost 400 food industry executives and stakeholders came from 53 countries.



There was agreement from retailers, brand manufacturers, governments and NGOs that the most important food safety issue in 2020 would be dealing with microbiological problems. The experts also predicted that the source of the problem would be not in the home or the stores. The problems will be from the farms and the factories. The pull of consumer influence is evident in another important prediction. Food safety will become a part of the challenge to find sustainability. 80% of respondents believed this would happen.

Bob Gravani, Professor of Food Safety, Cornell University proposed some proactive take home messages for the delegates. He urged building cultures of food safety within all organisations and building supply chain partnerships that push for harmonisation of standards to drive best practice.



John Lamb, Senior Agribusiness Advisor for Rural and Sustainable Development at the World Bank analysed the geographical implications of the survey. “Food safety in 2020 will be challenged by a range of issues such as public policy and climate change. It’s incredibly complex but one thing is for sure – it will be more challenging. The Global Food Safety Initiative will be of fundamental importance in finding the solutions.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Genetic Fingerprints, Credit Cards and Google

Dr Donald L. Zink, Senior Science Advisor, Office of the Center Director, FDA, CFSAN, Department of Health & Human Services, USA



If the technology enabling consumer-facing data management – credit cards, the internet, Google – has made giant strides in the last fifty years, then food safety technology has kept pace, according to Donald Zink. Networks such as PulseNet make it possible to identify outbreaks in a way that simply was not possible thirty years ago. Technologies such as PFGE typing, optical mapping and DNA sequencing are taking over food microbiology labs. Of particular importance is the emerging field of molecular epidemiology, as it allows for genetic fingerprinting of pathogen strains. Though demanding of bandwidth, data storage and data analysis capacity, genetic sequencing is getting faster and cheaper. Today, the FDA can sequence four genomes a day at a cost of USD 1,000 per strain. If the organisation meets its current goals, field labs will be able to definitively identify and characterize foodborne pathogens within a few days, rather than a few weeks. The idea is to perform this task on automated equipment and share the data among state and federal labs in real time. The ultimate goal is to be able to give direction to investigators and epidemiologists that could greatly reduce the time needed to make the link between an outbreak of food borne illness and the food that caused it.

Public-Private Partnerships to Improve the Food Safety System of the Future

Michael R. Taylor, Deputy Commissioner for Foods, Food & Drug Administration, USA

Michael Taylor told delegates that the Obama administration was committed to making food safety “a priority”. Taylor acknowledged that the agency was working with an outdated legislative framework, but promised change. Legislation currently with Congress will give the FDA a mandate and the legislative tools to update its approach. “We will invest resources and effort to build a truly national, integrated food safety system.” However, the FDA would not succeed alone. “Partnership throughout the system couldn’t be more important.” Taylor promised to forge stronger relations with public agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) , local government and private sector initiatives such as the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). The new laws will also deliver stronger “tools for enforcement”.



**WELCOME TO THE NEXT
GLOBAL FOOD SAFETY
CONFERENCE IN LONDON,
16TH – 18TH FEBRUARY
2011!**