Food Safety: The Role of Traceback

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1997 Food Safety Initiative

♦ Juice HACCP Rule (2000)
  • immediate issue for juice processors and producers


1997 Initiative (con’t).

♦ Better information transfer among local, state and federal officials

♦ Better coordination during traceback investigations

Traceback Investigations

♦ A method used to determine the source and distribution of the implicated product associated with an outbreak, and

♦ Identification of potential points where contamination could have occurred

How does it start?

♦ Most outbreaks in the US are reported by consumers who suspect a connection with a food they have eaten and an illness they are experiencing

♦ Reported to local health officials

♦ Nationwide network of CDC, FDA, USDA and state health depts

Recent Produce Tracebacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pathogen</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cantaloupe</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Salmonella</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raspberries</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Cyclospora</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raspberries</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Cyclospora</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsley</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Shigella</td>
<td>&gt;400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaf Lettuce</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>E.coli O157:H7</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FDA Involvement
- Each outbreak involved interstate commerce
- All outbreaks were traced to primary source of contamination
- Some farms were/are being visited

“The Guide”
- Covers broad areas of:
  - Water
  - Manure and Municipal Biosolids
  - Worker Health and Hygiene
  - Sanitary Facilities
  - Field Sanitation
  - Packing Facility Sanitation
  - Transportation
  - Traceback

Traceback
- “The ability to identify the source of a product can serve as an important complement to good agricultural and management practices intended to minimize liability and prevent the occurrence of food safety problems”.

Produce Challenge
- Fresh produce is often quickly consumed; often gone by the time outbreak is reported
- Current industry practices make tracing difficult:
  - recycling of shipping containers
  - co-mingling during distribution and retail
- Difficulty of confirmation at the farm/packinghouse level

Advantages
- Protection from false association with a particular outbreak
- Rapid and effective traceback can minimize consumer anxiety and adverse publicity
- Competitive advantage to those that can demonstrate an effective program

Practical Matters
- Larger operations may have more direct distribution and marketing chain
- All packers can keep complete records
  - farm/field
  - sanitation
  - supplies
  - production codes
Minimum Documentation

♦ Date of harvest
♦ Farm Identification
♦ Handling chain from grower to receiver
♦ All aspects of packinghouse operations

Partnerships Needed

♦ Growers, packers and shippers have to work with partners in transportation, distribution and retail to identify the whole system
♦ Industry trade groups can help with this effort, and also help implement technologies
  • coding
  • labels
  • software

Resources & References


♦ FDA website: www.cfsan.fda.gov
  • Guidance Document
  • Surveillance Data
  • Juice HACCP Rule