

☀️ **The dirty business of food fraud**

With the steady advancement of detection technology in all walks of life, one would expect criminals and would-be criminals to avoid deliberate acts of food fraud, or EMA as regulators call it – [Economically Motivated Adulteration](#). The sad truth is that technological progress seems to provoke and encourage those so inclined.

☀️ **Food fraud in Canada is complex**

The CFIA has just published its [Food Fraud Annual Report 2022 to 2023](#). The findings are encouraging on one hand - adulterated food detected and recalled, launch of contaminated food interrupted - but discouraging on the other - food fraud is rampant. Total tonnage of impacted food was 140,000 kg. The CFIA explained “[...] it would be inaccurate to draw conclusions that food fraud in Canada is on the rise or decline based only on comparing these results to previous years. The state of food fraud in Canada is more complex than that. [...] We target high-risk products, using previous findings as well as other sources of intelligence, to increase the likelihood of [detection]. Since we are constantly refining our activities and targeting higher-risk areas, the CFIA's ability to find food misrepresentation, and mitigate the associated risks, is continuously improving. As such, these results are not representative of overall compliance rates within the Canadian marketplace.”

☀️ **Unbridled, unabashed perpetrators**

One of the top three reasons for the ratification of the [Safe Food for Canadians Act in 2012](#) was to allow “tougher penalties for intentional activities that put the health and safety of Canadians at risk”. The CFIA has successfully prosecuted food fraud in Canadian courts. One case involved refined vegetable oil misrepresented as Extra Virgin Olive Oil, an act for which there was no remorse on the part of the villain. The accused rejected the CFIA's chemical analysis and technical results, and filed a “Notice of Violation” with the independent Canadian Agricultural Review Tribunal. The tribunal endorsed the conviction. In the words of the CFIA: “This was the first SFCA violation that was appealed and upheld by the tribunal”.

☀️ **A global, costly multi-faceted menace**

Sometimes food fraud is local and independently conducted; in other instances, it is globally connected.

☀️ **USA**

In 2022, the Consumer Brands Association (formerly Grocery Manufacturers of America) applied a cost of US\$10 - \$15 Billion annually to [food fraud in the USA](#). Beyond what the FDA is doing to counteract EMA, the University of Minnesota has established the [Food Protection and Defense Institute](#) which “[...] focuses on reducing the potential for contamination at any point along the food supply chain and places a high priority on addressing potential threats to the food system that could lead to catastrophic damage to public health or the economy. The Institute incorporates cutting-edge research and innovation into our education initiatives across a wide range of disciplines including supply chain resilience, information sharing, risk analysis and assessment, education, epidemiology, economics, and many more.”

☀️ **UK: The cost of food crime**

In 2022, the UK's Food Standard Agency published [The cost of food crime - phase 1](#), in which a framework was developed consisting of five categories of costs: victim (medical and lost earnings), criminal justice system, crime career (opportunity cost – misplacement of talent and skill), market (economic), and intangible (pain, suffering and distress). The application of the economic model - [The cost of food crime Phase 2](#) - published in 2023, estimated food crime costs the UK between £410 Million and £1.96 Billion per year. Despite this staggering figure, the authors concluded that small and medium size businesses are more vulnerable than large, such that the occurrence of food crime in the UK is probably much higher than that captured in this economic model.

☀️ **Southern Hemisphere estimates**

In Australia, the issue is an [A\\$3 Billion problem](#). In New Zealand, dollar estimates are not available, yet [Consumer NZ](#) claims 10% of the food supply is impacted.