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FoodSafety
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Beyond the Headlines: Food Safety Risks in Imported Foods

Thursday, May 14
2:45 - 3:45pm



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Beyond the Headlines: Food Safety Risks in Imported Foods Panelists



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Question for you...

If a contamination issue traced back to one of your foreign suppliers surfaced tomorrow, how confident are you that you know who to contact first?



1. **Very confident** — I have a documented response protocol and know exactly who to call
2. **Somewhat confident** — I have a general idea but haven't tested or formalized it
3. **Not very confident** — I'd figure it out, but it would take time and some scrambling
4. **No idea** — I honestly don't know where I'd start

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What will we cover in the next hour?

Regulatory
foundation

(5 min)

2 case
studies

(30 min)

Practical
resources

(10 min)

Open
Q&A

(10 min)

Key
takeaways

(5 min)



Scan the QR code to log questions →

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The food on your plate is more global than you think

91%

of seafood
consumed in the
U.S. is imported

FDA / PIRG Food for Thought 2025

55%

of Americans are
confident in the U.S.
food supply — an
all-time low, down
from 70% in 2023

IFIC Food & Health Survey 2025

32%

1 in 3 Americans
think imported
foods are less
safe than domestic

IFIC Food & Health Survey 2025

60% of FDA-regulated food facilities are located outside of the United States

U.S. Food & Drug Administration, as cited in Congressional Research Service,
FDA Oversight of Food Safety and Foodborne Illness Outbreaks, 2025.

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If your name is **on the import**, the responsibility is **yours**

Under FSMA's Foreign Supplier Verification Program (FSVP), the U.S. importer of record is legally responsible for verifying that foreign-sourced food meets U.S. safety standards — before it enters the country.

1

Know your hazards

FSVP § 1.504

2

Evaluate your suppliers

FSVP § 1.505

3

Perform verification activities

FSVP § 1.506

4

Keep records and be ready

FSVP § 1.510

*A qualified individual must develop or oversee your FSVP.
"We trusted our supplier" is not a defensible in FDA inspections.*

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Two agencies — a split jurisdiction

FDA - Human Foods Program

~80% of the U.S. food supply

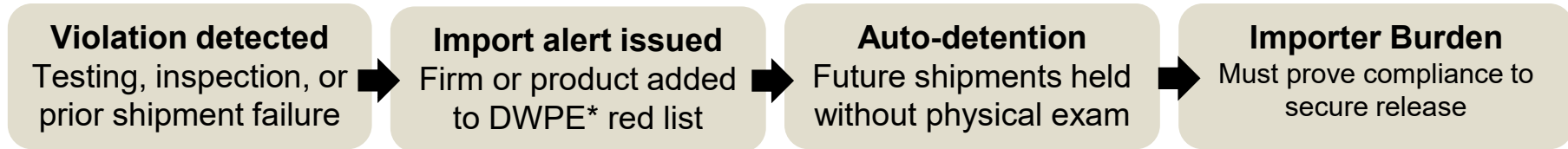
- Seafood, produce, dairy, processed foods, dietary supplements, water.
- Risk-based, periodic inspections.
- FDA ImportShield (FISP) and SERIO+ launched to accelerate entry screening.

USDA - FSIS

~20% of the U.S. food supply

- Meat, poultry, and processed egg products
- Continuous: inspectors are physically present at processing facilities during operations
- USDA permits are required before import - FDA reviews most products after arrival

HOW AN FDA IMPORT ALERT WORKS



*Detention Without Physical Examination



Sources: U.S. FDA (fda.gov); Congressional Research Service, 2025; FD&C Act § 801, 21 U.S.C. § 381.

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Case Study 1: Contaminated Cinnamon in Applesauce Pouches

<https://www.nbcnews.com/now/video/-applesauce-poisoning-leads-to-calls-for-stronger-food-regulation-199208> Cinnamon producer named in outbreak of elevated lead levels in children

by CORAL BEACH



Food Safety News 2024

Over 200 children with lead poisoning due to consuming cinnamon applesauce

MARLER CLARK
THE FOOD SAFETY LAW FIRM

Marler Clark 2023

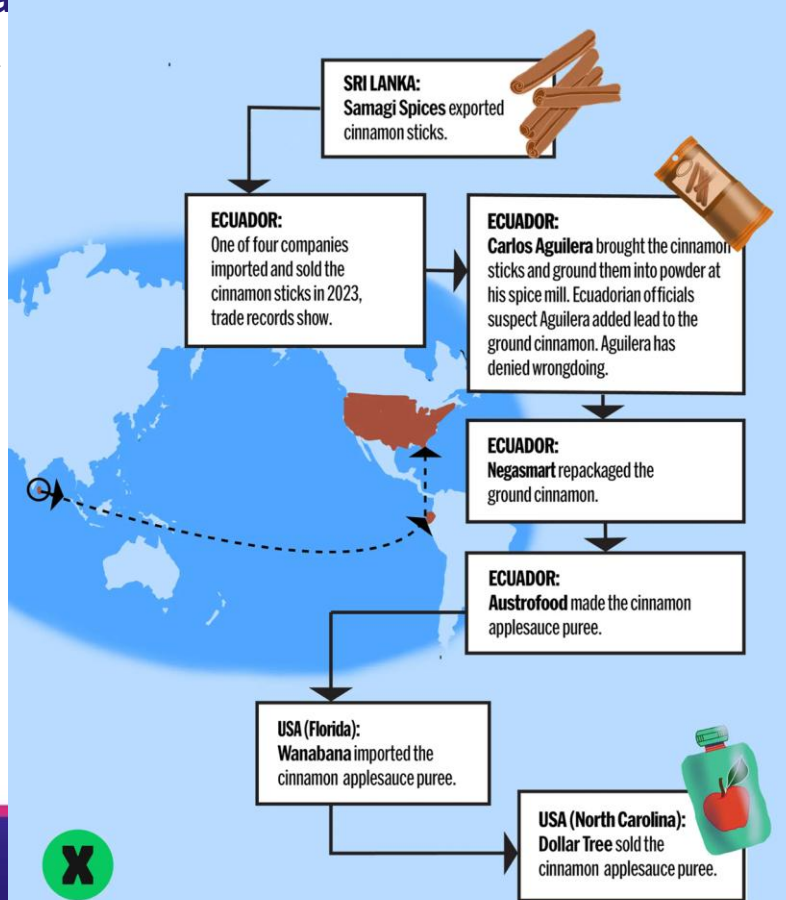
- October 2023 NCDHHS investigating elevated blood lead levels in children
- NCDHHS looked at environment & common foods – Applesauce
- Lead chromate was added to cinnamon for economic gain
- Incident sickened over 500 children



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Case Study 1: Contaminated Cinnamon in Applesauce Pouches

Where did the supply chain break down?



The Examination 2024

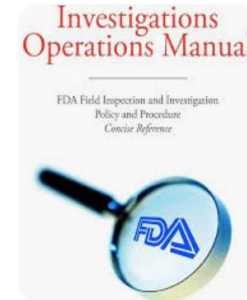


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Case Study 1: Contaminated Cinnamon in Applesauce Pouches

Regulatory and Legal Consequences

- FDA opened investigation 10/28/23 & issues public health safety alert
- WanaBana issues voluntary recall 10/30/23 and expands on 10/9/23
- Warning letters- June 2024 FDA issued a warning letter to Dollar Tree Inc, for failure to remove recalled product from shelves
- Brand Reputational Damage- Erosion of customer trust in WanaBana, Dollar Tree, Schnucks and Weis brands.
- Litigation Exposure- Parents filed lead poisoning lawsuits



Case Study 2: “Radioactive Shrimp”

abc NEWS • Live Video Shows ▾ Shop

More shrimp recalled due to possible radioactive contamination, FDA says

- CBP alerts FDA to detection of Caesium-137 (Cs-137)
- August 14, 2025 FDA issues import alert
- August 18, FDA confirms trace amounts of Cs-137
- The FDA issues a safety alert
- PT Bahari issues recall



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Case Study 2: “Radioactive Shrimp”

Where did the supply chain break down?

- Chemical hazards are part of the FSVP but the detection amount made it unlikely the supply chain would have self-reported
- Cause is reported as Industrial site near Indonesian processor
- Supply chain scrambles to comply with newly required import certification

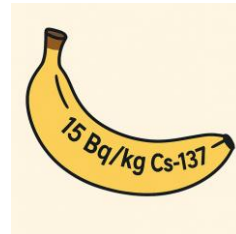
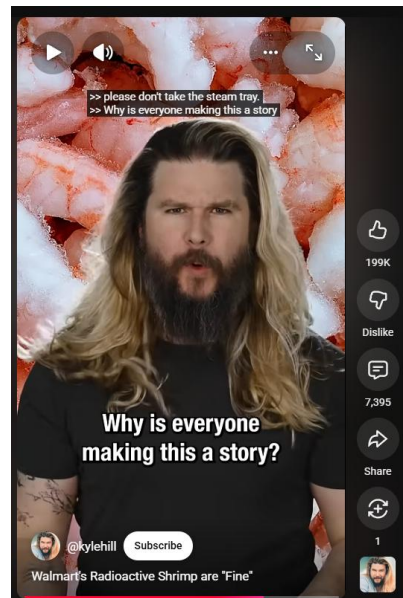


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Case Study 2: “Radioactive Shrimp”

Risk communication chaos

“FDA has recommended Walmart recall this product.”



Case Study 2: “Radioactive Shrimp”

Consequences

- Supply Chain uncertainty
- Recalls
- Brand Reputational Damage
- Litigation Exposure



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NOT ALL LABS ARE EQUAL — AND THE WRONG ONE WON'T PROTECT YOU

- FDA Laboratory Accreditation for Analyses of Foods (LAAF)
 - Part of FSMA regulation
 - Accreditation Body for lab must have ISO/IEC 17011:2017 std
 - (e.g., A2LA, ANAB, IAS, PJLA)
 - Lab must have ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation specific to each test
- Method validity (AOAC, FDA BAM, ISO)
 - Rapid methods, composite sampling/retention of samples, subcontracting?
- Experience with products to be tested
- What capabilities are needed (Micro/Pathogens, Chemical/Pesticide/Heavy Metals, Nutritional Labeling?)



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NOT ALL LABS ARE EQUAL — AND THE WRONG ONE WON'T PROTECT YOU

- Network of Labs/Service/Reliability
 - Turnaround time (affects shipping timeline)
 - Customer support
 - Sample logistics (Do they sample on-site or supplier send samples?)
 - Import Risk reports/analyses
- Quality Management
 - Will they allow audits by customers?
 - Check sample program
- Equipment
 - Modern HPLC and GC equipment



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NOT ALL LABS ARE EQUAL — AND THE WRONG ONE WON'T PROTECT YOU

- Bottom Line
 - Select a food testing laboratory like you are choosing a vendor or supplier and vet them thoroughly. This can make the difference if your shipment is being held by the FDA/USDA/Customs-Border
 - Get list of current customers and contact them. Ask about competency of lab/service level/turnaround time
 - Understand if the company subcontracts work with other labs



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CRISIS RESPONSE PLANNING — WHEN AN INCIDENT GOES PUBLIC

A product crisis can happen to any importer. What you do in the first 24 hours can shape the outcome.

Plan Elements

- Trigger Criteria
- Internal Notification
- Regulatory Notification
- Supply Chain Containment
- Communication Cadence
- After-Action Reviews

Team Roles

- Incident Commander
- Regulatory Lead
- Food Safety Lead
- Supply Chain Lead
- Legal Counsel
- Communications Lead
- Customer Liason

Core Skills

- Regulatory fluency
- Traceability literacy
- Risk communication
- Media/ Social channel monitoring
- Cross-functional authority
- Tabletop exercise experience



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THE DOCUMENTS YOU SHOULD HAVE BOOKMARKED — AND ACTUALLY READ

These are the primary FDA sources importers rely on for day-to-day compliance. All are publicly available and free.

FSVP core documents

- FSVP Final Rule (21 CFR Part 1, Subpart L)**
- FDA FSVP Guidance for Industry**
- "Am I Subject to FSVP?"**
- FDA FSVP Records Checklist**

PRO TIP The FSVP Guidance Q&A document is 100+ pages — use the table of contents to find your specific situation rather than reading cover to cover.

Import monitoring tools

- FDA Import Alert Search**
- FDA LAAF Lab Database**
- FDA Recalls, Market Withdrawals & Safety Alerts**
- FSMA Technical Assistance Network**



PRO TIP The FDA records checklist published in 2025 is the closest thing to an inspector's playbook. Run it on yourself before FDA does.



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FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 The responsibility is shared; not only your supplier's
- 2 Contamination can be from throughout the Supply Chain
- 3 Standard testing doesn't catch every hazard
- 4 FDA enforcement is intensifying - tools are improving
- 5 The resources exist - the gap is usually in using them

THANK YOU!



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