



theUriahgroup

A Food Security Primer: Risk to Recovery ***A Six-Part Series***

Part 1: Overview

“America’s agriculture and food system is an extensive, open, interconnected, diverse, and complex structure providing potential targets for terrorist attacks. We should provide the best protection possible against a successful attack on the United States agriculture and food system, which could have catastrophic health and economic effects.”

From Homeland Security Presidential Directive #9

Food security is defined as the prevention or elimination of deliberate contamination of food. The contaminants used are generally one of five types: biological, chemical, physical, nuclear, or radioactive.

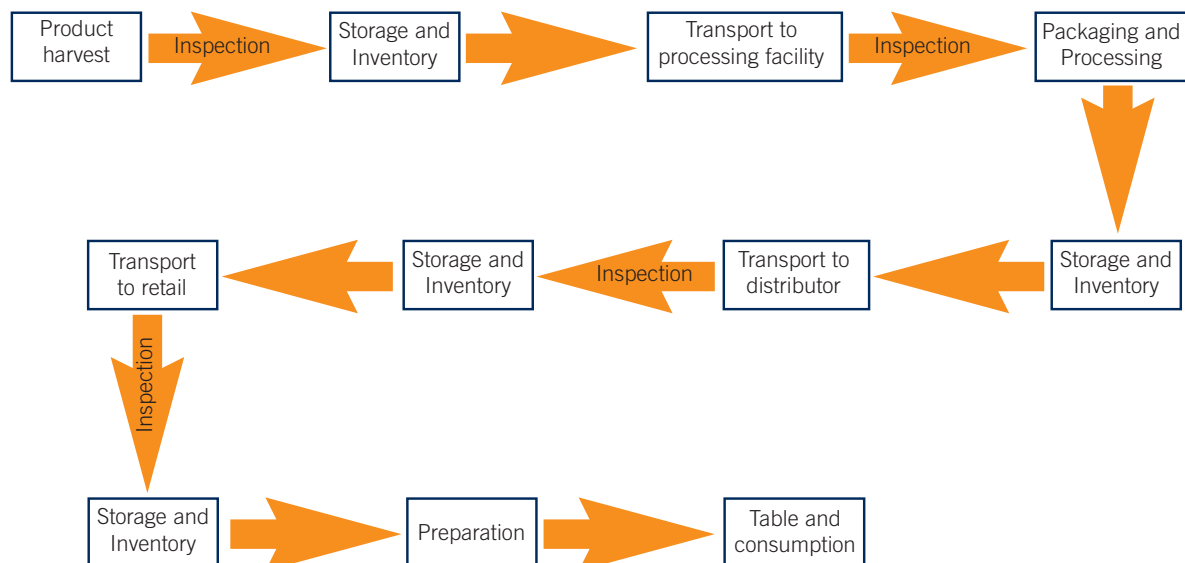
The industry’s concern with food security did not begin with the horrific events of 9/11 or the ensuing war on terrorism. We have always had the disgruntled employee, the mischievous delinquent, or the aggressive competitor to deal with. But with the emergence of the terrorist threat, we find ourselves facing an adversary that is organized and more than capable of inflicting catastrophic damage not only to our individual business and industry, but also to our national economy.

Our terrorist enemy appears to know how to fight best with explosives that sensationalize physical destruction and the immediate loss of human lives. Although the malicious contamination of food and agriculture has been researched in the caves of Afghanistan, the use of food as a weapon has not occurred in a terrorist action and has therefore been under-funded as a low in priority. With the issuance of Homeland Security Presidential Directive # 9, that status is changing. In HSPD #9, the White House has directed federal agencies to address the potential for a terrorist attack on the nation’s food supply and reach out to include industry to coordinate these activities.

On the industry side, initiatives have begun to include food security in industry’s processes, policies, and procedures, as has been successfully accomplished with the area of food safety. Food is a major economic force with % of the GNP directly attributed to the industry, % of the work force, and \$ in annual sales.

The vulnerabilities in the “farm-to-fork” supply chain are numerous, as illustrated in the figure:

Farm-to-Fork Supply Chain



Food security, like food safety, is an operational issue as much as it is a security issue. Effective food security policies and procedures provide our organizations with the business processes that not only minimize the potential disruption and liability of our businesses, but also enable profitability by building accountability at all levels of the business.

The first step in incorporating food security into a company's procedures is through risk management policy development. The Uriah Group has developed a model for risk management that effectively walks the client through the process of risk assessment, planning, and implementation.

However, given the urgency of this issue, there is a need to accelerate this process. The Uriah Group has developed a series of food security exercises in which the participants “discover” the existing risks themselves. Not only does this establish “buy in” from the participants, it actually results in an effective risk assessment, plan, and implementation methodology that the team itself creates. The exercise use of a real world multimedia simulation of a potential event works as an excellent training device, serving to retain the attention and involvement in the discussions and the solutions.

Over the next few issues we will provide you a quick overview of the risk management model and the ensuing baseline of the training and the results. In various steps, we will demonstrate achievable results in planning and prevention, response, and recovery. ■

Gordon Meriwether and Rita Goodell are principals with the The Uriah Group, a veteran-owned small business located in Falls Church, VA, dedicated to delivering effective, real-world solutions for emergency response. We provide management, technical, and training consulting services to our clients, ensuring their customers, employees, and community have a secure environment in which to work, eat, rest, shop and play. You can contact the writers at gmeriwether@uriahgroup.com and rgoodell@uriahgroup.com.

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