



theUriahgroup

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

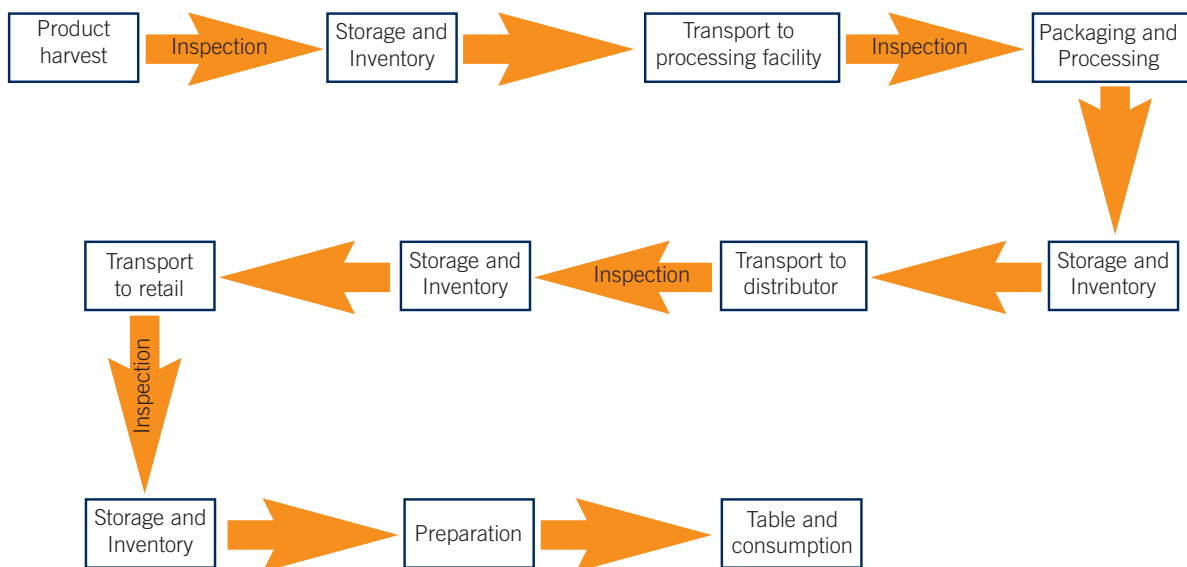
Part 4: Prevention—A Lesson in Awareness

“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.”¹

Our food supply chain is the most efficient and robust in the world today. Not only do we feed our own population, but we also provide the world with access to our abundance. We are truly “the world’s breadbasket.”

But that efficiency comes with a price: access, access at every node of the process, access to outsiders, insiders, transporters, inspectors, and the public. The opportunity is there for mischief of all flavors. The access comes with the territory. Our role is to build in preventive measures that make it difficult, if not impossible, for unauthorized access to the food supply chain (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Farm to Fork Supply Chain



¹ Office of Homeland Security: National Strategy for Homeland Security, Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2002, p.vii.

The foundation of a preventive program is securing the internal and external elements of the premises through physical restrictions and systems such as security monitors, gates, swipe badges, guards, access policies, and so on. Every day, there are more resources and checklists available on the Internet to assist with this process, including those listed at the end of this article.

These systems have major limitations. They are fixed, predictable, and easily dealt with by anyone with purpose and commitment determined to do harm. However, these limitations can be overcome through the proper awareness training of all of the people involved in the supply chain.

Making your team aware of the potential threats, the vulnerabilities, and the valuable assets of the business is not only a critical element in the preventive focus of your security plan, but also a necessary construct of your successful business operations.

No one business can prevent all attempts by a determined intruder, nor do we need to fend off all these efforts. If we look at the below Venn diagram (Figure 2), we get the picture that not all threats, vulnerabilities, and assets are of equal importance when preventing an attack or raising the awareness of our team. (Risk assessment was the subject Article #2 in this series.) By identifying the areas of focus for an awareness program and following an assessment of the threats, vulnerabilities, and assets, your management team can leverage this overlapping concept to identify the critical areas to be addressed in preventing an intentional contamination. Where the three circles overlap indicates the most critical activities.



An example would be the transportation of goods to your customers across the country.

- Your assets are your drivers, equipment, goods in shipment, and your brand name.
- The threats are hijackers who are interested in financial gain or terrorists interested in doing harm to our economy, your business, and as many people as possible by contaminating your product.
- The vulnerabilities are the security of the truck during transit, the long length of the trip, and the overnight stays by the driver and equipment en route.

The assets in this case cannot be adjusted. The threats in this case cannot be controlled or reduced by your company. That leaves us with addressing the vulnerabilities inherent in the cross-country trip. Maintenance on the truck must be performed to prevent mishaps. Locks and procedures must be checked and enforced. And, most importantly, the driver and other employees must be trained to be vigilant and proactive, to understand that they are the keys to securing the company's assets.

A carefully crafted food security awareness program is the first step. Indoctrinating your team in the plan particulars and holding them accountable to perform and report will complete the process. Our tabletop exercises have clearly demonstrated that an informed, trained, and motivated employee is your best defense.

Next month we will discuss how your incident response can make the difference.

Recommended Resources

Agricultural and Food Transporters Conference, Resources Directory for Security Practices in the Transportation of Agricultural and Food Commodities, (http://www.truckline.com/cc/conferences/atc/securityguide/FINAL_DIRECTORY.pdf).

Association of Food and Drug Officials, Food Emergency Pocket Guide, York, PA, 2004.

National Food Processors Association and Food Marketing Institute, Food Security Manual for Processors, Distributors and Retailers, Washington, DC: 2002 (www.nfpa-food.org or www.fmi.org).

National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, Food Security: An Introduction, Washington, DC: 2003 (www.nraef.org).

U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Guidance for Industry: Retail Food Stores and Food Service Establishments: Food Security Preventive Measures Guidance, Washington, DC, 2003 (<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/%7Edms/secguid5.html>).

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Food Producers, Processors, and Transporters: Food Security Preventive Measures Guidance, Washington, DC, 2003.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness Act of 2002, Title III – Protecting Safety and Security of Food and Drug Supply, Washington, DC, 2002. (<http://www.fda.gov/oc/bioterrorism/bioact.html>).

U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA Guide for Security Practices in Transporting Agricultural and Food Commodities, Washington, D.C.: 2004 (<http://www.usda.gov/homelandsecurity/aftcsecurguidfinal19.pdf>). ■

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 are gmeriwether@uriahgroup.com and rgoodell@uriahgroup.com.

Copyright The Uriah Group, 2004