

Introduction: What works to prevent food fraud

The aim of our study was to guide the future development of the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) by providing a greater understanding of their role in prevention strategies to reduce food fraud.

The NFCU defines food crime as ‘serious fraud and related criminality within food supply chains,’ and identifies seven types of activity which can manifest within food crime offences. Food crimes will often include the application of more than one of these activities within a single pattern of offending.

Theft - dishonestly obtaining food, drink, or feed products to profit from their use or sale.

1. Illegal processing - slaughtering or preparing meat and related products in unapproved premises or using unauthorised techniques.
2. Waste diversion - illegally diverting food, drink or feed meant for disposal, back into the supply chain.
3. Adulteration - including a foreign substance which is not on the product’s label to lower costs or fake a higher quality.
4. Substitution - replacing a food or ingredient with another substance that is similar but inferior.
5. Misrepresentation - marketing or labelling a product to wrongly portray its quality, safety, origin, or freshness.
6. Document fraud - making, using, or possessing false documents with the intent to sell or market a fraudulent or substandard product.

According to the FSA and [Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs \(Defra\)](#), food fraud is defined as the act of “deliberately placing food on the market for financial gain, with the intention of deceiving the consumer” (Defra, 2014). There are multiple definitions of food crime and food fraud. Appendix 2 contains a glossary of food crime and food fraud related terms that are used in this report. Appendix 3 provides background to the definitions and meanings of food fraud assimilated from the literature.

The approach our research took was to:

1. Investigate strategies for the prevention of food fraud which have been successfully utilised in other countries and organisations outside of the FSA (both within the UK and internationally);
2. Understand what has worked well in preventing food fraud and the lessons learned from these initiatives/strategies;
3. Understand what has worked well in preventing fraud in other commodity/ physical goods-based industries (for example, pharmaceuticals) and the lessons learnt from these strategies;
4. Provide recommendations which could be adopted by the NFCU and incorporated into the Unit’s key strategies; and
5. Provide recommendations for any future research required within this area.