Food Recalls in Australia

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The FSANZ Recall Process

- FSANZ’s role is one of coordination and monitoring
- Process supported by legislative requirements for food businesses to act and report
- FSANZ assists in the recall process, but the decision whether or not to recall foods rests with the States and Territories

Key Elements of a Food Recall

- FSANZ is notified of a potential recall situation
- The Home State or Territory determines whether a recall is warranted
- FSANZ collects information concerning the recall and disseminates it

You think you have a food problem?
WHAT DO YOU DO?

Contact the sponsor (company)
Responsibility for all aspects of a recall lies primarily with the sponsor.
The sponsor should contact the relevant State or Territory health authority to determine if a recall is required, and FSANZ

STOP production and distribution of the affected products.
CONTACT distributors (wholesale, retail, and other trade customers) of the affected product by PHONE and follow that with a FAX.
PLACE ADVERTISEMENTS in newspapers. Also think about a media release

Within 2 days of initiating a recall you have to inform, in writing, the Minister responsible for Consumer Affairs. It may also be necessary to inform the relevant State or Territory department responsible for fair trading.

Arrange isolation, storage and disposal of affected stock.
Check the effectiveness of the recall.
Prepare interim and final reports and recommendations for FSANZ.
Implement a course of action to prevent a recurrence of the problem.
Product Information Required

Details required:
- Food Type
- Brand Name
- Use By or Best Before Dates (as they appear on packaging)
- Packaging and size
- Sponsor Details
- Distribution

Other Relevant Details

- Category and sub category of the hazard risk
- Proposed recall level (consumer or trade)
- Action proposed by the company
- Australian Product Number (APN) or other code number
- Method of disposal
- Country of origin
- Domestic and overseas distribution

Post Recall Reporting

- Reports used to show recall carried out satisfactorily and consumers have been protected
- Examples of questions asked
  - Circumstances leading to recall
  - How widely were the relevant batches distributed
  - How much manufactured? Recovered?
  - How was stock disposed of? Provide destruction certificates

State/Territory Challenges

- Dealing with different State/Territory can be a challenge
- Each State/Territory deals and assess food recalls differently
- One State/Territory would recall a product while another may just withdrawal
- FSANZ is working with each State/Territory to develop better continuity for food recalls

Issues that may slow down a recall

- How to conduct a recall
- Lack of preparation
- Distribution Lists
  - Accuracy – Contact details of those that received implicated product
  - Knowledge – whether a company received the implicated product
- Timeliness – sponsor carries on with the day to day running of the business
Mistaken use of the recall process

• Garlic Bread Recall – 2008
  ➢ Sponsor recalled garlic bread because of blue colouration
  ➢ FSANZ advised that this was not a public health and safety risk
  ➢ Sponsor went ahead with recall
  ➢ Later the sponsor admitted that the product was recalled for aesthetic reasons

Recalls and Media Attention

• Some recalls get a lot of media attention
  ➢ Woolworths Fresh Milk Lite 2 L – 2009
    ➢ Microbial – Escherichia coli
  ➢ Bonsoy Soy Milk - 2009
    ➢ very high levels of iodine due to Kombu
    ➢ World wide recall

International Recalls and Australia

• Food Incidents overseas have triggered recalls in Australia
• Recall of Pistachios from Setton Pistachio of Terra Bella Inc in the US resulted in 3 recalls in Australia
• FSANZ receives information from overseas agencies about recalls and investigates possible imports

Food Industry Recall Protocol

What is the purpose of this protocol?

Guidance for food businesses on
• Developing a written recall plan
• Conducting a food recall
• Roles of government and industry

Food Recall Review

• Review in consultation with government and industry stakeholders
• Training of after hours recall officers has been revised and improved
• Updated versions of the Food Industry Recall Protocol and Government Authority Food Recall Protocols published in 2008

Conclusion

• Prompt and effective recall action ensures safety of the food supply and promotes consumer confidence in a company’s products