

Exploring Fraud in Food Regulation

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This presentation draws upon an ESRC/FSA-funded project, 'Food Fraud - A Supply Network Integrated Systems Analysis'. The project questions how the nature, functioning and regulation of a food supply network affect the risk of food fraud by adulteration. Its overall aim is to develop a predictive, transposable, dynamic computational model that will outline nodes in a food supply network vulnerable to criminal acts of adulteration. In this presentation we address one particular stream of the project: understanding the social and criminal organisation of particular acts of food fraud to develop concrete understandings of the 'problem' and the implications of this for 'regulation' (broadly construed).

Criminal opportunities for food adulteration arise not only for organised external criminal groups, but also for legitimate actors operating within the food industry in the course of their occupations. It is critical to understand how these actors exploit these opportunities and we do so by undertaking a high-level 'crime script' analysis. This maps the sequence of actions used by offenders during crime commission and identifies points of vulnerability suitable for regulatory intervention.

The application of regulatory theory within the model is critical if there are to be more robust forms of regulation within supply chain management and those applying regulation must have an expert understanding of both the subject matter being regulated and of those factors which will influence actors to engage in regulatory breaches. Crime script analysis enables regulators to capture the sequential detail of the crime-commission that is necessary for designing strategic regulatory measures that have lasting reduction effects on crime. Legitimate actors within the supply chain will adjust their behaviour depending on the pressures and vulnerabilities in the food supply chain at a given time, but if one knows where regulation in the chain is likely to be most effective its effects can be enhanced further.

Bios:

Sarah Devaney is a Senior Lecturer in Law and Co-Director of ManReg: the Manchester Centre for Regulation and Governance. Her areas of research interest are the regulation of food, medical treatment and biotechnologies. Currently she focuses on levels of expertise required to regulate these areas as well as on social and cultural factors which affect inclinations to comply with regulation.

Jon Spencer is a Senior Lecturer in Criminal Justice. His main research interests are in relation to food fraud and adulteration, cross-border and organised crime, illegal immigration, the management of offenders in the community and the process of community reintegration in relation to offenders.

Nicholas Lord is a Lecturer in Criminology and Co-Chair of the European Working Group on Organisational Crime. His research interests are in the area of white-collar and corporate crimes of a financial and economic nature such as fraud, corruption and bribery.