



able precautions to prevent such an incident from occurring. As a result, a food business's liability for cases of contamination, fraud or food-borne disease often hinges on the question of whether it could reasonably have foreseen that the actions of companies within its supply chains might result in a breach of food law. A food business which had access to, or was in a position to obtain, information indicating that such a breach was likely

to occur within its supply chain would find itself exposed to costly and reputationally damaging litigation. Meanwhile, one which could not reasonably have been expected to obtain such information would not be held legally to be responsible.

This means that investing in identifying the companies which make up their extended supply chains, or in gathering information about the emerging risks and threats to which those companies might be exposed, may not always be in food businesses' best interests. While possession of this information might indeed help a business to prevent breaches of food law and thus avert potential crises, it might also be taken as evidence that its staff could have foreseen offences committed by companies within their supply chains. In short, food businesses are presently caught between a hope that improved knowledge of their supply chains might help them to better manage the risk of food scares and scandals, and an awareness that possession of such knowledge could place them at risk of prosecution for offences that they did not commit.

Caught in this double bind, many British food businesses appear to be

managing their own exposure to supply chain risk through what Linsey McGoeey might term a policy of 'strategic ignorance'. For McGoeey (2012: 559), strategic ignorance is a name for practices which ensure that: 'unsettling knowledge is thwarted from emerging in the first place, making it difficult to hold individuals legally liable for knowledge they can claim to have never possessed'. In this case, food businesses limit their liability for breaches of food law through ensuring that their knowledge of their extended supply chain remains sufficiently limited that they may plausibly claim that they could not reasonably have foreseen any incidents which might occur within it. Many such businesses appear to have concluded that this can best be achieved by working hard to demonstrate that their immediate suppliers are responsible companies which can reasonably be trusted to ensure that compliance is maintained among the businesses which make up their extended supply chain.

This cultivation of a strategic ignorance of the threats and vulnerabilities which may exist within extended supply chains arguably plays as crucial a role in the risk management strategies of many food businesses as does the production of knowledge about those supply chains. Yet many participants in the Making Provisions project also felt that this ability to maintain a strategic ignorance of their supply chains might itself be increasingly a risk. In the aftermath of the Horsegate scandal key food industry assurance schemes such as the British Retail Consortium's Global Standard for Food Safety were overhauled, and now place greater emphasis on the traceability of food-stuffs and on the assessment and management of food fraud risk at all levels of the supply chain. Meanwhile the Modern Slavery Act, passed in 2015, obliged businesses with an annual turnover of more than £36 million to publish an annual statement detailing

what steps they have taken to ensure that all parts of their supply chain are free of human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced labour.

Such developments suggest that both legislation and private sector regulatory arrangements may be moving gradually towards a position that ignorance of lapses with one's extended supply chain is no defence – a trend which raises questions for academics and risk management practitioners alike. Even if risk management approaches which mobilize a strategic ignorance of supply chains remain legal, are they still acceptable either to food regulators or to the general public? What might be the impact upon the food industry of any potential move towards a regulatory model premised upon a complete knowledge of, and tighter control over, food supply chains which are global in scale and enormous in scope? (ply ch)0.r36 -1.23-shsun a ranresis tobecomle f23-s pat,n thn jdus htowsis risk tober regl(at)0.5 (ed)5 () chainsofn the utsur?ePreraptsthos(e)5 ()TJ0 -1. ns might re fognen for concludaigy .hasign othance)0.5 (ed)0.5 ew n to the netence os food suppl ene - net rmr rpnr venemen.

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