

Food Safety Modernization Act—Not Just a One-Way Ticket

BY [JACK PAYNE](#) ON MAR 31, 2016



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC estimates](#)) that roughly one in six Americans (or 48 million people) get sick from foodborne diseases each year. The obvious response when someone reports a foodborne illness is to find where the contamination occurred and issue a recall. The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), however, seeks to shift the focus from responding to contamination to preventing it. The FSMA is increasing the need to track what happens to food across the supply chain.

Confirming the integrity and safety of your food is no longer just an issue of what happens inside the manufacturing walls. Tracking your food across the entire supply chain ensures that manufacturers and distributors take a one-up-and-one-back approach—meaning being able to know where it came from (one back) and whom you sold it to (one up). It's all about being able to rapidly respond to a recall in the unfortunate event of a food safety issue.

One Back—the Supplier

Part of the FSMA focuses on tracking back to the supplier. For example, if you are a deli meat producer, it is likely that you do not get your deli meat directly from the farm. You probably buy it upstream from a meat supplier and process it into the deli meat that is sold in stores. While it is important to know which supplier your meat came from, the FSMA focuses on where the supplier got their meat from. If chicken comes into your deli meat factory contaminated, it will need to be traced back through each step to find the source of contamination.

One Up—the Distributor

Another part of the FSMA focuses one up to the distributor. You need to trace whom you're selling your product to, where it's going and how it got there. Traceability plays a big role in this. As the importance of track and trace moves downstream into the food supply chain, manufacturers and distributors will benefit by using traceability solutions to meet FSMA standards and compliance. Although compliance is a huge reason for traceability and understanding where your

product is going, there are other benefits as well. Labor is more efficient and easy to time and track, and food is moved more quickly through the supply chain with less risk of spoilage or contamination.

Roundtrip Focus

Many producers, manufacturers and retailers have product-tracing systems already in place. However, they vary depending on the amount of information the system records, and how far forward or backwards in the supply chain the system tracks.

While the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not have the legal authority to require companies across the supply chain to use electronic traceability solutions, companies are recognizing that electronic record-keeping is the way the FDA prefers to receive information. Electronic traceability gives you the capacity to view information at both a high level and a more drilled-down version. Having access to these different views helps you to understand and track the supply chain process roundtrip—from receipt of raw materials to shipment to customers and all the way back again.

Ultimately, no matter which part of the supply chain your organization falls in, ensuring the safety of your consumers puts your company's reputation on the line all the time. The FSMA warrants manufacturers to take a proactive stance, and dedicate necessary time and resources toward compliance planning for prevention and supply chain traceability implementation.

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