

Cumin Spice Recall Underscores the Need for Food Traceability Software

Written by **Babette DuPriest**

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CBS recently reported the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recalled hundreds of products after traces of peanut were found in cumin spice. The production gaffe could potentially cause severe or even life-threatening ailments to those with peanut allergies. These types of undeclared allergens are a primary driver in major domestic food recalls.

The FDA is now warning all those with peanut allergies to avoid cumin and any products that contain the spice. Citing the group Food Allergy Research and Education, CBS added 15 million Americans have food allergies, including one in 13 children. A total of eight foods - peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, wheat, soy, fish and shellfish - account for more than 90 percent of domestic allergies.

Data Collection and the Supply Chain

While it's difficult to say what would have prevented this recall, or any recall for that matter, it's evident that today's technology is designed to help mitigate against any similar instances in the future. Food traceability software helps improve visibility and agility in a supply chain, making production an easier and more organized.

Little is known how allergens make their way into foods, and those reactions are hard to track. However, supply chain data management can help with oversight and improve operations and expedite a recall process, if necessary. A lack of internal visibility in the supply chain often leads to errors and oversight, some of which can be costly. Food traceability software gives supply chain managers the control and visibility they need to effectively oversee an entire operation in real time. In today's digital age, manufacturers are doing more harm than good by not investing in cutting-edge food traceability software solutions.

In fact, on behalf of the Food Marketing Institute, Deloitte found that the average cost of a food recall is \$10 million, which may be enough to bring any sized operation to its knees financially, not to mention the detrimental impact a recall has on reputation.

Supply chains are highly complex systems and require real-time management and proper oversight. Without the ability to see into the supply chain, production companies are risking potential mistakes. Integrated data management solutions allow companies to isolate items within their own supply chain and coordinate recall issues with suppliers and distributors. While a recall is a worst-case scenario, it's a potential reality manufacturers have to deal with, and companies that equip themselves with the right automated data infrastructure to handle such an issue are setting themselves up for success.

Protecting Your Brand

In its white paper, "Protecting Your Brand - The Food Traceability Survival Guide," RFgen identifies ways to mitigate the risk and cost of a recall.