

## Be alert for fraud

During the disruption caused by COVID-19 there are three reasons why food SMEs are at higher risk of being sold fraudulent ingredients:

- Coronavirus restrictions around the world mean unpredictable shortages in specific ingredients encouraging fakes, substitutions or dilutions, including materials being sold as “food grade” when they are not.
- Date-expired ingredients, destined for food service that have been held up in the supply chain are at risk of being diverted and repackaged, and then dumped on the market.
- Large ingredient suppliers may face disruption in their supply chains, combined with being unable to operate their usual processes of audit and inspection.

Be suspicious of unusually cheap ingredients, or easy offers of ingredients that are supposedly in short supply. If it's ‘too good to be true’ it is probably too good to be true.

Food fraud is not just about horsemeat labelled as beef or sub-quality olive oil. It can be as simple as lying about the duration date on a sack of flour or the country of origin of meat. In some cases, fraudulent ingredients can be a health risk.

### More information:

The Food Authenticity Network is a free website. SME members are welcome. It includes a “Food Fraud Mitigation” page with a number of practical guides. There are also Discussion Groups, where you can discuss concerns with industry experts.

<http://www.foodauthenticity.uk>

### If you have suspicions:

Report anonymously to the National Food Crime Unit (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

<https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/food-crime>

or the Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit (Scotland)

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/business-and-industry/scottish-food-crime-and-incidents-unit/food-crime-incidents>

