

Case Study

- Large food manufacturer has identified contaminated soy protein isolate during routine testing of raw ingredients
- Source of contaminated soy protein isolate is an Asian country
- Soy protein isolate is used extensively in the food industry to increase the protein content of a wide variety of foods and drinks that are consumed across all age and social groups
- Soy protein isolates are also used in infant formulas
- Subsequent testing has identified the contaminated soy protein isolate in leading brands of infant formula, breakfast cereal, bread and other products that are currently on sale
- The contaminated product is potentially hepatotoxic, containing a toxin that causes acute liver disease
- Literature suggests that the toxin can be fatal in vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women and older people

Questions

Phase 1 – Media

- What would make this story newsworthy?
- Would you run with this story? Why or why not?
- What is the immediate story? What are the underlying issues that the media would follow up?
- What key words would you put in your headline? What angle would you take on the story?
- What sources would you seek and why?
- What would you draw on to frame/ anchor the story?
- What risks would you identify in this case that you would seek to convey to consumers?
- What reaction would your story elicit in consumers?
- What impact do you see your story/ reporting having on consumer trust?

Phase 1 – Public relations officials

- Discuss the extent to which this is a realistic scenario
- Discuss whether this scenario is likely to be significant issue for the company concerned. If so, what features are salient?
- How would you respond to a situation like this?
- Are issues of public trust or confidence in the food supply considered in dealing with this issue? What would you do in this situation to facilitate trust with consumers?
- What responsibility do you think, if any, that media consider when publicizing this story?

Phase 2 – Policy makers

- To what extent is this a realistic scenario?
- Is this situation likely to be significant issue for the company concerned? Why or why not? What features are salient?
- How would you respond to a situation like this?
- How important is trust in food policy setting and decision making?
- What specific mechanisms are used by policy makers to enhance consumer trust in the food system?
- What processes of trust building currently exist between policy makers and consumers? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these current processes?
- How could policy be used to facilitate building and maintaining consumer trust?
- Do you use social media to communicate with consumers (for example in order to inform them of policy)? Why or why not? Are you targeting a particular consumer group?
- What platforms (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, other) do you use? When do you use them?