

Q. Please explain the food supply chains in place for processed beef products supplied by Lidl NI.

A. All of our processed beef products on sale in Northern Ireland are sourced from reputable and BRC/IFS certified suppliers. The raw materials are sourced, processed and packaged by these approved suppliers. The finished product is supplied to our regional distribution centre, with each Lidl Northern Ireland store being allocated stock directly from this centre.

Q. If fraud or criminal activity is happening, where, in the opinion of Lidl NI is it most likely to happen?

A. Fraud is most likely to happen at the raw materials sourcing stage.

Q. What can be done to protect the food supply chain - given the complexity, where is the best place for testing to ensure the produce authenticity - that the label & product match?

A. Routine testing can be completed to check if the finished product and labels are compliant. Testing the meat authenticity of the product should be completed at both the raw material and finished product stage.

Q. Does this complexity not allow that each part of the chain manages to make money, except the farmer at the beginning of the chain & also pushes up prices for the consumer?

A. We do not necessarily agree. If businesses are operating efficiently and with integrity at each critical point of the supply chain, there is no reason why such businesses cannot trade profitably.

Q. What is Lidl NI doing to ensure the interests of the farmer at the one end of the supply chain & the consumer at the other are protected?

A. We are solely working with reputable and local suppliers with whom we have healthy, long-term relationships. These suppliers have proven through their high levels of quality assurance and traceability processes, along with our own rigid auditing controls, that they can guarantee that the interests of the farmer and the consumer are protected.

Q. What checks & balances are Lidl NI putting in place to ensure that this type of food fraud does not happen again? Please provide reassurances that costs associated with protecting against food fraud are not passed down the supply chain to farmers or upwards to consumers?

A. We have stringent quality control processes in place and all of our beef processing suppliers are BRC Grade A and farm quality assured. We have taken the decision to complete routine DNA testing on all of our beef processed products and we see this as an investment in our customers.

Q. Regarding the food authenticity tests being carried out on behalf of the FSA, can you clarify what testing methodology you used and if this methodology was approved by the FSA. Was the testing done in house or externally?

A. The methodology used in our DNA testing is PCR. This method is approved by the FSA. All testing was completed externally by accredited laboratories. All test results have been forwarded to the FSAI & FSA as requested.

Q. While the focus has been on horse meat in beef products, what is Lidl NI doing to ensure that pig DNA does not appear in beef products?

A. To date, as per the FSAI & FSA guidelines of adulterated products containing foreign DNA at levels >1%, we have not had any positive test results for foreign DNA in our beef processed products. As part of our routine DNA testing, other species are being tested as well as equine. This will allow us to identify if there is any adulteration of our beef processed products.