

Food safety, not just a Western luxury

By Leigh Andrews

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A customer buys meat and vegetables from your store. He goes home, eats that fresh produce, and contracts a serious illness. Possibly even dies. Here's how to prevent this nightmare from becoming a business reality.

If your business is in any way related to the produce of food, food safety isn't just an add-on. If you get it wrong or don't even consider it, people die. Just think of the reputational damage that results from the social media stories that do the rounds when consumers claim to find a hair, a nail, a mouse or worse in the 'fresh food' bought in your store...

“ @WOOLWORTHS_SA response 🐑🐑🐑🐑🐑🐑🐑🐑🐑🐑🐑🐑 that well done part. Woolies was never ready 🐑🐑
pic.twitter.com/KsG34T7XJA— Hippocrates Jr (@phindo N) December 7, 2015 ”

Danny Wegman, CEO of Wegman's Food Markets, says when tackling food safety the entire supply chain needs to be involved as the food production process has evolved drastically. Today, some food is eaten raw, which brings in additional risks.

That's why Wegman says food safety is crucial at every step of the retail journey, from the growing and manufacturing of food products to the packaging and even labelling thereof.

In your customer's shoes

“First implement good retailing practices and a culture of food safety,” says Wegman, as there is no magic wand or silver bullet approach to quickly sort the issue. Food safety is truly critical to business and you’re never done with it, there are always new challenges.



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“Once there’s a food [contaminant] scare, everyone steers clear”, he explains. One way to meet this head on is to actively focus on the wording included on your food labelling. If it needs to be cooked above a certain temperature to ensure no disease is spread, spell it out on the label for your customers. Never assume basic kitchen hygiene is common knowledge, especially in poor areas. It goes beyond merely catering to the planet’s nutritional needs to also including education and risk assessment. That’s important to everyone, but it’s not just about talk, companies need to take action, says Wegman.

He recommends going so far as to put up posters of your business' employees and their role in food safety, whether they deal directly with food or sit in the HR or accounts department, as we are all consumers at the end of the day and need to put ourselves on the other side of the till. Doing so helps crystallise the importance of food safety practice as it makes all employees accountable. We all have a role to play.

[Click here for more](#) from the Consumer Goods Forum Global Summit.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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