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Chairman and CEO, Kroger



Over 600 million people suffer from foodborne illnesses every year; food safety is one of our core values, and we're committed to providing safe, high-quality food to our customers.



The Why

The changing landscape of food manufacturing has impacted the way Kroger produces and sells food to our consumers. Some of the more impactful changes included the advanced technology for identification and tracking of foodborne illness; the interconnectedness in communication worldwide, with consumers having information at their fingertips; and the global market in which consumers expect anything, anytime, anywhere. All these changes have brought more attention to food safety issues, as witnessed by product recalls that were national and often global. This was Kroger's call to arms. Keeping in step with our industry partners, Kroger began the GFSI journey to ensure food safety and quality for our consumers, who demand safe high-quality products which Kroger is dedicated to offer.

The Kroger Co. has a history of valuing food safety, not only in our 35 manufacturing facilities, but also as an expectation for our many suppliers and co-manufacturers. Kroger currently utilises in-house and external manufacturing to produce a multitude of brands under several Kroger banners and other brands, including Simple Truth, Simple Truth Organic and Private Selection. Our number one priority is to safeguard our 11 million loyal customers that shop in our 2,800 stores every single day.

The How

Our journey with GFSI began in 2008 with a deliberate action to raise the bar around food safety and quality. GFSI provided a standardised, industry accepted, in-depth system to ensure the food safety and quality of Kroger-branded products. The building blocks of our GFSI journey began in our manufacturing facilities. Kroger became one of the first major retailers to require all our suppliers to achieve a GFSI-recognised certification.

At the start of pursuing GFSI-benchmarked audit standards and certification for our manufacturing plants, we reviewed several cer-



tification programmes and chose SQF. As a company, we constructed a timetable as to when all plants would be certified. The first step was to have gap audits conducted by a certification body to determine where our opportunities were. Our corporate food safety team then worked with each of our plant teams to fill gaps. Training materials were developed and shared with all our plants. Once ready, we then pursued a GFSI-benchmarked audit standard. This entire process took one year to complete for all manufacturing facilities, and all plants were successfully certified. GFSI and its certification bodies had laid the framework for Kroger to build

a strong internal food safety system and enhance our food safety culture, allowing us to focus on year-to-year improvement.

Today, in addition to our manufacturing facilities, we require all our ingredient suppliers and co-manufacturers to be certified to a GFSI-benchmarked programme in order to do business with the company. Kroger has also been an active member of the SQFI Technical Committee, helping to shape future versions of both the manufacturing and storage and distribution codes.

The Benefits

Since GFSI is a globally-recognised programme, it has allowed us consistency in expectations from country to country and supplier to supplier. The ability to pull and review audits for any of our suppliers has reduced apprehension of doing business in foreign countries; it provides us with assurance that they're following a uniform food safety standard. We have realised other benefits since adopting GFSI at all our facilities, the biggest one being creating uniformity of policy and practice. GFSI has allowed us to have the same comprehensive approach to food safety enterprise-wide. Since adopting GFSI-benchmarked certification, our facilities are

always audit ready. GFSI has also led to the creation of a consistent industry and regulatory food safety standard to which our suppliers are held accountable.

As we are on our food safety culture journey, GFSI has played a critical role in establishing visibility from what the food industry views as an important part of a food safety programme. GFSI has enabled us to keep in step with our peers and partners, ensuring food safety within multiple levels of our manufacturing process, including suppliers and customers.

Figures

The Kroger Co. has a history of valuing food safety, not only in our 33 manufacturing facilities, but also as an expectation for our many suppliers and co-manufacturers. Kroger currently utilises in-house and external manufacturing to produce a multitude of brands under several Kroger banners and other brands, including Simple Truth, Simple Truth Organic, and Private Selection. Our number one priority is to safeguard our 11 million loyal customers that shop in our 2,800 stores every single day.

100% of our manufacturing facilities are audited to a GFSI benchmark standard.

36 manufacturing facilities with SQF certification, with 94% plants being rated "excellent" in 2018.

10,000+ direct raw material suppliers and co-manufacturers are certified to a GFSI-benchmarked audit standard

35 distribution centres pursuing GFSI-benchmarked audit standard.

