



M&S announces new supplier auditing regime to 'protect customers'

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Marks & Spencer (M&S) is to carry out two audits per year for every food supplier from April.

Speaking at the *Institute for Global Food Security* at Queen's University in Belfast, M&S executive director of food Steve Rowe said that the retailer had developed a new approach with suppliers as part of its strategy of prioritising quality over cutting prices.



Rowe said that M&S would carry out a “food safety” audit to protect the customer and an “integrity audit” to protect the brand.

“The former will be announced and collaborative,” said Rowe. “It needs to be as we like to see the factory at 4am before production starts to see that it’s clean. The latter will be totally unannounced. We expect to be on the factory floor or in the office working within 15 minutes of arrival.”

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M&S will also carry out tests on raw material samples for DNA, country of origin and composition, he added.

Rowe said the new strategy had been developed in collaboration with suppliers.

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He also credited the retailer's business model of having fewer and shorter supply chains and longstanding relationships with suppliers with protecting both the brand and its suppliers. He added that M&S did not recall any product during the *horse meat scandal* and used DNA testing to check the provenance of beef products.

"You can always make stuff cheaper, but normally it involves removing something," said Rowe.

"To protect your brand and to protect your customer in the future, acting with integrity has become a value you cannot do without."

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