



CSAFI Thought Leadership Program

Advancing Cyber Resilience Across the Global Food & Agriculture Supply Chain

Executive Summary

Cyber risk is one of the most significant and least understood threats facing the global food and agriculture sectors. Ransomware, AI-driven attacks, supply-chain compromise and operational technology (OT) disruption are no longer theoretical concerns, they are active, escalating risks with direct consequences for food safety, production continuity and public trust.

The Cybersecurity Association of the Food Industry (CSAFI) created the **CSAFI Thought Leadership Program** to address a critical gap: the need for credible, experience-driven leadership voices from within the food ecosystem to help guide the industry forward.

This program invites senior leaders, practitioners, academics and sector experts to contribute practical insight, lived experiences and forward-looking perspectives that strengthen collective cyber resilience across the food and agriculture value chain.

This white paper explains the purpose of the CSAFI Thought Leadership Program, who it is for, how it works and why participation matters. It is not just for individual leaders, but for the resilience of the global food system itself.

1. Why Thought Leadership Matters

The food and agriculture sector is undergoing rapid digital transformation, including:

- Increased automation and robotics
- Converged IT and OT environments
- Remote access for vendors and integrators
- Cloud analytics, artificial intelligence and IIoT adoption

At the same time, adversaries are leveraging automation and artificial intelligence to scale cyberattacks at unprecedented speed. Recent industry analysis shows **AI-enabled cyber activity is increasing by more than 600%**, dramatically reducing the time between initial access and operational impact.

In this environment, generic frameworks, vendor-driven messaging and fear-based cybersecurity narratives no longer meet the needs of food and agriculture leaders.

What the industry needs instead is:

- Real-world insight from leaders who understand food operations
- Practical lessons learned from incidents and near misses
- Clear, experience-based guidance for executives and operators
- Collaboration across food companies, cybersecurity experts, academia and industry associations

The CSAFI Thought Leadership Program exists to surface and amplify exactly this kind of insight.

2. What Is the CSAFI Thought Leadership Program?

The CSAFI Thought Leadership Program is a **collaborative, industry-led initiative** designed to:

- Capture authentic leadership perspectives on cybersecurity in food and agriculture
- Translate complex cyber risk into operational, safety and business outcomes
- Share credible, peer-driven insight with the wider CSAFI membership and the broader industry

Unlike marketing content or academic theory, CSAFI Thought Leadership is:

- **Experience-based** — grounded in real operational environments
- **Vendor-neutral** — focused on principles, not products
- **Sector-specific** — tailored to food and agriculture realities
- **Action-oriented** — designed to influence decisions, not just awareness

Contributions are published through the **CSAFI Leader Insight Portal** on <https://csafi.org/insights> and shared via CSAFI's official LinkedIn presence, forming a trusted and practical knowledge base for the global food sector.

3. Who the Program Is For

The CSAFI Thought Leadership Program is intended for individuals with meaningful experience and perspective across the food security ecosystem, including:

- CEO's, COO's and board members of food and agriculture organizations
- Plant managers and operations leaders willing to share real-world perspective
- CIO's, CISO's and IT/OT security leaders connecting cyber risk to plant operations
- Engineering, automation and production leaders
- Authors, academics and researchers focused on food systems, cybersecurity or critical infrastructure
- Policy, standards and industry-association leaders contributing to sector-wide resilience

Participants do not need to be cybersecurity specialists. What matters is a **practical understanding of how cyber risk intersects with food safety, operations, supply chains and leadership decision-making.**

4. What Thought Leaders Are Asked to Contribute

Participation in the program is intentionally lightweight and respectful of executive time.

Most contributions take the form of:

- A short **Leader Insight** (approximately 10 minutes to complete)
- Responses to guided questions focused on experience and perspective

Typical topics include:

- Lessons learned from cyber incidents or near-misses
- How leaders balance security, safety and operational continuity
- Ransomware preparedness and decision-making under pressure
- Cyber insurance realities and risk ownership
- OT and production-line cyber risk
- Vendor and supply-chain exposure
- Leadership responsibilities in cyber resilience

CSAFI manages editorial review, formatting and publication. Contributors are never asked to disclose sensitive or confidential information.

5. Why Participate in the CSAFI Thought Leadership Program

5.1 Contribute to Collective Defense

Cyber threats targeting food systems do not respect company boundaries.

By sharing insight, thought leaders help:

- Reduce risk across the broader food ecosystem
- Prevent repeat mistakes across organizations
- Strengthen collective preparedness and resilience

This is cyber defense as a **shared responsibility**, not a competitive advantage.

5.2 Elevate Credible Industry Leadership

The CSAFI Thought Leadership Program provides:

- Professional recognition within a trusted industry forum
- Visibility among senior peers, regulators and partners
- Association with an independent, non-profit industry authority

Thought leadership through CSAFI is about **credibility and contribution**, not promotion.

5.3 Shape the Industry Narrative

Public discourse around cybersecurity in food is often driven by:

- Vendors
- Regulators
- Media coverage of crises

The CSAFI Thought Leadership Program ensures that **industry voices themselves** help shape the narrative: grounded in operational reality rather than speculation or fear.

6. How the Program Works

- Apply to participate via **<https://csafi.org/insights>**
- Participants receive a short Leader Insight questionnaire
- Contributions are reviewed for clarity and relevance (not opinion conformity)
- Approved insights are published on the CSAFI website to recognize leadership
- Insights are shared with CSAFI members, partners and industry audiences

Participation is voluntary, non-commercial and fully aligned with CSAFI's non-profit mission.

7. Ethics, Independence, and Trust

CSAFI maintains strict principles to protect the integrity of the program:

- No vendor sponsorship or paid placement
- No product promotion or sales messaging
- No modification of contributor intent
- Clear separation between thought leadership and commercial activity

These principles ensure that CSAFI Thought Leadership remains a **trusted source of industry insight**, not marketing content.

8. The Bigger Picture: Protecting the Food System

Cybersecurity failures in food and agriculture can result in:

- Production shutdowns
- Food safety incidents
- Supply shortages
- Loss of public trust
- Broader national and global food security impacts

The CSAFI Thought Leadership Program recognizes that **resilience starts with leadership**: leaders willing to share perspective, challenge assumptions and help others prepare.

By participating, thought leaders contribute to something larger than any single organization: the long-term resilience and integrity of the global food supply.

9. Next Steps

If you have experience, perspective or insight that could help strengthen cybersecurity resilience in the food and agriculture sector, CSAFI invites you to participate in the Thought Leadership Program.

To learn more or to contribute a Leader Insight, visit:

<https://csafi.org/insights>

About CSAFI

The Cybersecurity Association of the Food Industry (CSAFI) is a global, non-profit organization dedicated to improving cybersecurity resilience across the food and agriculture ecosystem.

CSAFI brings together industry leaders, operators, technologists, academia, food associations and policymakers to address cyber risk through collaboration, education and practical guidance.