

U.S.-based technology giant IBM (NYSE: IBM) has announced a major blockchain collaboration with leading retailers and food companies to strengthen consumer confidence in the global food system.



The consortium includes Dole, Driscoll's, Golden State Foods, Kroger, McCormick and Company, McLane Company, Nestlé, Tyson Foods, Unilever and Walmart.

The entities will work with IBM to identify new areas where the global supply chain can benefit from blockchain, according to a release.

The company highlighted one-in-ten people fell ill and more than 400,000 died around the world every year due to contaminated food.

"Many of the critical issues impacting food safety such as cross-contamination, the spread of food-borne illness, unnecessary waste and the economic burden of recalls are magnified by lack of access to information and traceability," the company said.

"It can take weeks to identify the precise point of contamination, causing further illness, lost revenue and wasted product. For example, it took more than two months to identify the farm source of contamination in a recent incidence of salmonella in papayas."

It said blockchain - a continuously growing list of records which are linked and secured using cryptography - was ideally suited to help address these challenges because it established a "trusted environment for all transactions."

"In the case of the global food supply chain, all participants -growers, suppliers, processors, distributors, retailers, regulators and consumers - can gain permissioned access to known and trusted information regarding the origin and state of food for their transactions," it said.

"This can enable food providers and other members of the ecosystem to use a blockchain network to trace contaminated product to its source in a short amount of time to ensure safe removal from store shelves and stem the spread of illnesses."

In helping to identify new areas where blockchain can benefit food ecosystems, the collaborating companies' work will draw on multiple IBM pilots and production networks in related areas.

“Unlike any technology before it, blockchain is transforming the way like-minded organizations come together and enabling a new level of trust based on a single view of the truth,” IBM Blockchain general manager Marie Wieck said.

“Our work with organizations across the food ecosystem, as well as IBM’s new platform, will further unleash the vast potential of this exciting technology, making it faster for organizations of all sizes and in all industries to move from concept to production to improve the way business gets done.”

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