

Consumer Perspectives on the Importance of Improved Food Safety and Traceability Practices Worldwide

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CENTER FOR
Science IN THE
Public Interest

CSPI

- The Center for Science in the Public Interest is a bi-national NGO representing consumers in both the US and Canada
- 900,000 subscribers to the Nutrition Action Health Newsletter in U.S. and Canada
- Issues:
 - Food Safety
 - Nutrition
 - Alcohol Policy
 - Biotechnology
 - Integrity in Science
 - Eating Green



CSPI's International Data Collection

- CSPI's food safety program collects international data on outbreaks and other food safety issues
- Issues include:
 - Food/Waterborne Outbreaks
 - Food Safety Studies
 - Food Safety Policies
 - Animal Health
 - Plant Health

Safe Food International

- Clearinghouse for international outbreak information
- Organized by region: Africa, Europe, South East Asia, Western Pacific, the Middle East and Northern Africa
- Updates available on the internet or by email

<http://safefoodinternational.org/>



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Safe Food International Animal Health Data

- SFI collects data on animal health issues that pose a risk to human health or human food sources
- In 2008, SFI researchers collected 431 animal health stories from all regions
- 204 stories reported Avian Influenza
- 25 stories reported Anthrax

Consumer Confidence

- Americans' confidence in food safety is plummeting...
 - 78% of consumers do not believe that food is safer now than a year ago
 - 48% decline in consumer confidence
 - 46% worry about getting sick from food
 - 52% have only some or little confidence in the food inspection system

Why Consumers are Concerned

- Outbreaks, Recalls, and Warnings of Imported Products
 - Infant Formula, liquid milk, ice cream, yogurt, other dairy (China): melamine
 - South Korea, New Zealand, Ghana, Tanzania, Vietnam, Taiwan, EU
 - Pet Food (China): melamine
 - U.S., Canada
 - Jalapeno Peppers (Mexico): *Salmonella St. Paul*
 - U.S., Canada
 - Shellfish (Mexico): Hepatitis A
 - Spain
 - Dumplings (China): Pesticide Contamination
 - Japan

Foodborne Disease Surveillance & Investigation in the U.S.

- ❖ FoodNet – active surveillance
- ❖ PulseNet – laboratory network that performs microbial sub-typing
- ❖ *Outbreak Alert!* – food attribution



Source Information

- Traceability
 - Our ability to track and connect illnesses far outstrips our ability to track products through a global marketplace
 - Can take weeks or longer to source an outbreak
 - EU program extends traceability through all stages of production, processing and distribution, and requires adequate labeling/documentation

Source Information

- U.S. Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL)
 - Recently implemented for meat, poultry, produce, seafood – exempts processed foods
 - 93% of consumers support COOL
 - 80% support more detailed labeling showing region, county, state, and farm of origin
- E.U. Country-of-Origin Labeling
 - Required on fruits, vegetables, beef, fish, eggs, and wine
 - 95% consumers surveyed in Germany were dissatisfied with current EU regulations
 - 88% wanted COOL for main ingredient of foods containing several ingredients

Sources: Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2008 and
Trans Atlantic Consumer Dialogue, 2008



Source Information

- Animal Identification
 - Already in place around the world to varying degrees: EU, New Zealand, Japan, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, and others.
 - US system (NAIS) voluntary
 - To date, only 500,000 of 1.4 million livestock premises registered under the system

Ethical & Humane Treatment

- Hormones
 - Differing international standards create confusion
 - Ex. New Zealand beef exports to U.S. and EU
 - Ex. U.S. difficulty exporting poultry

Ethical & Humane Treatment cont'd

■ Religious Slaughter

- Globally, there are 1.4 billion Halal-only consumers and 10 million Kosher-only consumers
- 55% of Americans who purchase kosher believe it is safer
- USDA has no additional safety requirements for kosher or halal products

■ Free-Range

- In U.S., only requirement is that animal “has been allowed access to the outside”
- Private labels: Australia’s Humane Society International has begun labeling products as a “Humane Choice”

GMOs

- Eurobarometer
 - 90% said that decision-makers should pay as much attention to environmental considerations as to economic and social factors (2005 poll)
 - 95% EU citizens want the right to choose GMO foods
 - 71% simply did not want GM food (2001 poll)
- U.S.– comfort levels differ between plant and animal GMOs:
 - 22% believe animal GMOs are safe
 - 34% believe plant GMOs are safe

Environmentally Sustainable Food

- Organic
 - Global consumers increasingly concerned over the environmental impact of food
 - 75.6% Chinese survey respondents said they buy organic food
 - 34.2% Japanese survey respondents said they buy organic food
 - 33% Thailand survey respondents said they buy organic food

Environmentally Sustainable Food, cont'd

■ Locally Grown

- Shoppers at farm markets willing to pay 2x as retail grocery shoppers for the same locally produced foods.
- Americans tend to favor buying food produced by small farms over what they perceive as corporate operations

What Consumers Want... besides *safe* food

- **Source Information**
 - Country-of-Origin Labeling
 - Animal Identification
 - Farm-to-Fork Traceability
- **Ethical & Humane Treatment**
 - Hormones
 - Religious Slaughter
 - Free-Range
 - GMOs
- **Environmentally Sustainable Food**
 - Organic
 - Local



What Global Consumers Need

- Harmonization of international standards for:
 - Traceability
 - Animal ID
 - Imports
- Greater information-sharing worldwide
 - Safe Food International

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