

Emerging Food Issues

The Consumer Perspective

Mary Alton Mackey
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Changes in Risk of Food Borne Diseases

- changes in diet
- new methods of producing and distributing food
- new or re-emerging infectious food borne agents
- increasing use of commercial food services
- and the growing number of people at high risk for severe or fatal food borne diseases.

Consumer food safety concerns

‘ready to eat’ foods

- prepackaged foods: spinach, lettuce, sprouts etc.
- deli foods
- flash pasteurized non acid juices
- globalization – foods from other countries

Consumer Food Safety Concerns

Mode of Production

- organically grown foods

Food Standards

- non enforcement of standards of identity and lack of standards of identity for major classes of foods

New Technologies

- novel food and foods or ingredients from new technologies i.e. nanotechnology

Consumer Concerns

Food Safety

- reformulation of foods (i.e. substitution of wheat for corn – potential allergic response)
- identification of allergens
- readability of ingredient and food storage information on labels

The Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

- Focus on quality and food safety
 - Canadian consumers want a return to an emphasis on quality
 - Canadian consumers want to know that their food is safe and nutritious to eat

This is a very good news story but a well kept secret.

Food Safety Across the Whole Value Chain

- Good Agricultural Practices and HACCP programs must be applied across the whole continuum from
 - inputs for farmers to
 - in home practices of consumers.
- No clear framework on how pieces fit together in the Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program

HACCP for consumers to be risk managers is missing

Industry –Led Food Safety Programs

- Applaud industries concern with improving its safety practices

- **Concerns**

Process for establishing and overseeing food safety standards

Voluntary Participation

Oversight

Process Lacks Transparency

- Best Practice standards are being created behind closed doors.
- If Government initiated standards, they would be put forward for Notice and Comment so that the entire public has an opportunity to give input

No mechanism exists for the public (including a wide range of sources and experts) to comment on the Best Practices before adoption.

Voluntary Participation

- Consumers cannot be assured that all food that reaches the marketplace will be as safe as possible.

Oversight

- Unclear how the audit for the whole value chain will be coordinated; appears to be component specific
- Government oversight appears lacking

Government authorities must guarantee the highest level of food safety to consumers

The Road Ahead

Increase the Credibility of Food Safety Standards by making them

- Mandatory
- Government approved
- Based on commodity –specific needs
- Applied consistently across producers of the same commodity
- Subject to Government of Canada oversight
- Developing a mechanism to apply to same standards to imports