

How to ensure the safety of food handling in markets

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Editorial

To ensure that the food handled in markets is safe and fit for human consumption, the national food safety authority needs to cover the following: the availability of law, directive, standards and instructions and codes of good practice related to food based on sound science and risk assessment. The forementioned regulations must govern:

- Food handling “transport, storage and display of food stuff” foods for special dietary purposes, food additives, Genetically Modified Food (G.M.F), licensing food processing plants, food packaging materials, food sampling, food claims and advertisement, food allergy and intolerance, and microbiological, chemical and physical criteria regarding ready to eat and some traditional meals.

The authorities also must provide advice and awareness to:

- Official agencies involved in food control, food industry and consumers regarding all food safety issues.
- Consumers, regarding several issues related to food such as: how to deal with different food items, how to prepare the meals in suitable and hygienic conditions, the nutritive value of food...etc.

Risk management must be conducted in association with other involved official agencies, and communicate risks to consumers,

public health professionals and the food industry. One example of the risk management is the control of imported food and feed at the border inspection posts is a Risk-Based channeling system such as:

- Red Channel: Document review, Cargo Examination, Sampling & Lab Analysis
- Yellow Channel: Document Review & Cargo Examination

The participation in national, regional and international alert systems requires the carrying out of daily screenings and investigation regarding all potential threats of food around the world, and the participation in several alert systems such as INFOSAN and RASFF. In the case of a food threat, a prompt decision such as a ban on importing any food containing hazardous or banned raw materials should be taken and maintained until the potential threat is dispersed.

The control of domestic food should be based on risk-based system, rely continually more on preventive approaches, and establish partnership with food trade, food industry and consumer associations. In this way we can better ensure the food that reaches the public in markets will be safe and fit to eat.