Opinion Article

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The Origins of Food Including the Practices Associated with Food Labeling and Hygiene

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Description

Additionally, food can act as a haven for microbes. While less developed countries have fewer restrictions and laxer enforcement of food preparation standards, industrialized countries have stricter guidelines. However, because to the large number of people engaged in the supply chain and the fact that food can still become contaminated with microbes despite all precautions being taken, achieving complete compliance is difficult.

Food and chemicals

Food can harbor microorganisms that can lead to illness or death in humans or other animals. The main types of contaminants are bacteria, viruses, mold and parasites. Physical contaminants (foreign bodies) include items such as hair, plant stalks or pieces of plastic and metal. When a foreign object enters food, it becomes a physical contaminant. If the foreign objects are bacteria, both physical and biological contamination will occur. Common sources of physical contamination are: Hair, glass or metal, insects, jewelry, soil and fingernails. Proper storage, sanitary equipment and surfaces, heating and cooling to appropriate temperatures and avoiding contact with other raw foods can greatly reduce the chances of contamination. Bacteria may not be visible to the naked eye, debris physical contamination may be hidden beneath a food and chemicals may be apparent or invisible; the contaminated food may not change in smell, texture, appearance or taste and may still be contaminated. Any foods deemed contaminated should be discarded immediately and any surrounding food should be checked for additional contamination. This includes various protocols that should be followed to avoid potential health hazards. Thus, food processing often overlaps with food safety to prevent harm to consumers. The pathways within this framework are safety between industry and the market and then between the market and the consumer. In catering to industry to market practices, food processing considerations include the origins of food including the practices associated with food labeling, food hygiene, food additives and pesticide residues, as well as policies on biotechnology and food and regulations for the management of governmental import and commodity inspection systems for foods. In catering to market to consumer practices, the common notion is that food must be safe in the market and the concern is safe delivery and preparation of the food for the consumer.

Organic and contaminated food

However, apparently regulations are not well known by the trade. Labels used for organic food, natural food and contamination-free food are not well understood by traders and many are unclear about their meaning. Traditional marketing systems, whether in China or the rest of Asia, currently provide little motivation or incentive for individual farmers to make improvements to either quality or safety as their produce tends to get lumped with standard products as it progresses through the marketing channel. Direct linkages between farmer groups and traders or end buyers, such as supermarkets, can help to avoid this issue. State-run administrations need to improve the condition of many markets through upgrading management and reinvesting market fees in physical infrastructure. Tightly sealed watertight containers are excellent measures to limit the chances of both physical and biological contamination during storage. Using clean, sanitary surfaces and tools, free of debris, chemicals, standing liquids and other food types different from the type currently being prepared, such as mixing vegetables, meats or beef, poultry can help reduce the chance of all forms of contamination. However, even if all precautions have been taken and the food has been safely prepared and stored, bacteria can still grow over time during storage. The timeframe before a food becomes unsafe to eat depends on the type of food it is, the overall environment and the method with which it is kept out of the danger zone. For example, liquid foods like soup kept in a hot slow cooker may last a few hours before contamination, but fresh meats like beef and lamb that are promptly frozen can last up to a year.