



## Global Food Safety: Challenges and Recommended Public Health Strategies

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### DEAR EDITOR,

The contribution of food in human survival and promotion of optimal health is vital, as it not only enables an individual to thrive, but can even be a definitive source of pleasure.<sup>[1]</sup> From a broader perspective, safe food plays a crucial role in ensuring sustainable development of a nation by augmenting the activities of trade and tourism.<sup>[1,2]</sup> This can be directly attributed to the globalization which has eventually resulted in the development of a complex and long global food chain.<sup>[1,3]</sup> The recent estimates released by the World Health Organization (WHO) suggested that in excess of 200 diseases can be caused by consumption of contaminated food or water, which accounts for 2 million deaths every year.<sup>[3,4]</sup>

Even though, it is a very well-known fact that any compromise in food security can result in morbidity, mortality, and even hamper the growth of a nation, yet we have not been successful in ensuring food safety at all possible levels.<sup>[1,2]</sup> This is because of the existence of multiple challenges, like rapid population growth, lack of comprehensive estimates, absence of integration of food safety with other national policies, climate deterioration, various potential levels for contamination of food, and emergence of antimicrobial resistance.<sup>[1-4]</sup>

Acknowledging the magnitude of foodborne illnesses, associated mortality, and the importance of food safety, it is high time that policy makers should develop adequate food systems and infrastructures to counter any food safety risks along the entire food chain; facilitate coordination between different sectors for better communication and joint action; plan measures to enable integration of food safety with other food policies and programs; and ensure that the food items that are

produced on the domestic scale continue to remain safe on the international scale.<sup>[1,3]</sup> In fact, everyone involved in the food chain should stick to their role to keep food safe as recommended by WHO.<sup>[1-3]</sup>

The WHO aims to not only encourage global prevention of foodborne illnesses but even ensure its prompt detection and development of an effective public health response to counter the public health threats associated with consumption of unsafe food.<sup>[1,3]</sup> In an attempt to achieve the aim, WHO has decided “Food safety: From farm to plate, make food safe” as the theme for World Health Day 2015.<sup>[5]</sup> Subsequently, the organization has devised five keys to safer food at home/hotels/markets, and five keys to growing safer fruits and vegetables for those who usually do not have access to food safety education.<sup>[5]</sup> Furthermore, the WHO is working to release the global burden of foodborne disease so that the overall burden of the problem can be ascertained and at the same time this will allow nations to estimate their own burden of foodborne disease so that resources can be mobilized.<sup>[1]</sup>

To conclude, as food supply chain is not restricted to national borders, it is high time that all the stakeholders should work in collaboration, and thus plan and implement effective steps to ensure the provision of a safe and healthy diet for all.


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