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

Caroline Smith DeWaal
Food Safety Director
OIE Conference, Buenos Aires
March 17-19, 2009
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/
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
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

Sources: University of Minnesota, Consumers Union, AP-Ipsos, Food Marketing Institute, USA Today
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

Source: USDA 2009
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”

Sources: Mintel International Group, National Public Radio, Food Quality
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

Sources: European Commission, PEW
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

Sources: University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Associated Press
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.

Source: Ohio State research, supported by USDA
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
Contact Information:

Caroline Smith DeWaal
Food Safety Director
Center for Science in the Public Interest
1875 Connecticut Ave, NW Suite 300
Washington, DC 20009

Phone: (202) 777-8366 Fax: (202) 265-4954
E-mail: cdewaal@cspinet.org

On the internet: www.cspinet.org
www.safefoodinternational.org