

CONSUMER PERSPECTIVES REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVED FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY PRACTICES WORLDWIDE

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Recent foodborne illness outbreaks in diverse food products—both domestic and imported—have raised significant concerns for consumers about the safety of a huge array of foods and the protection offered by national food safety programs. As global food interdependence increases, maintaining consumer confidence in these systems is paramount. The Center for Science in the Public Interest works to ensure that food safety and other crucial food-related issues are responsive to consumer needs. CSPI recently expanded the Safe Food International program, a web-based clearinghouse for outbreak reports from around the world to increase transparency about food safety and animal health problems emerging in different world regions. Consumers have expressed support for increased information about the sourcing of their food, including the widespread support for mandatory and comprehensive country-of-origin labeling, animal identification, and farm-to-fork traceability programs. Improving the information to consumers is crucial in improving their confidence in the global food supply. Consumer interest is high in the ethics of the food supply, issues of humane treatment and slaughter, the environmental impacts of food production, and genetically-modified food. Demand for organic, free-range, and locally-grown food has grown, and traceability of animal products is paramount to ensuring the credibility of these labeling schemes. For food products traded internationally, harmonization of national standards for identification and traceability is an important goal and can be usefully promoted by reference to relevant international standards of the OIE and the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Key words: Food safety and traceability – OIE standards – Codex Alimentarius standards – Safe Food International program Center for Science in the Public Interest.
