Creating stronger and reinforcing current food safety standards.

World Health Organization (WHO)

Table of Contents

HagaMUN 2026 | 27th, 28th of February and 1st of March
From Awareness to Action: Advancing gender equality in an unequal world

2

Introduction

Food safety is a critical global matter that must be addressed, especially in today's climate where preservatives are utilized to benefit markets and the nutritional value of foods are slowly being swept away from us. Food safety is a colossal issue because of its severity; large-scale impacts can cause population loss, harming economies and weakening global stability. Foodborne illnesses have developed hundreds of variants and can harm individuals in multiple ways, food poisoning being an extremely common disease that attacks various parts of the body. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that approximately 48 million individuals undergo food poisoning each year solely in the U.S., demonstrating the gravity of this issue. Due to the fact that existing regulatory frameworks struggle to keep pace with rapid changes in food production, population decline in certain regions and climate-related risks are actively escalating. While several organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the International Standards Organization (ISO) all contribute effectively to ensure that food safety is acknowledged, addressed, and discussed, the matter of food safety still remains at the risk of public health.

      The protection of public health is the ultimate reason for strengthening food safety laws and policies. By ensuring that ethical food safety laws are established, health risks caused by foodborne illnesses can be significantly decreased. Not only does this maintain and meet public health standards, but it also reduces health costs relating to this issue. Global cooperation is needed to enhance frameworks designed around food safety, and strengthening food security requires innovative strategies and can be aided with the use of technology. The consumption of safe, healthy food remains a challenge today because of four points of concern: availability, access, utilization, and stability. These four points are interconnected, availability being the key factor to the root of the issue. The availability of food is where the issue stems from; once individuals are given access to these resources, the way the goods are distributed affect their state, and determining whether they have been contaminated can uncover the safety level of the food that society consumes. Consequently, the point of utilization arises, as this is where the question of how safely these goods are used. Stability is required to ensure long-term consistency of access to these goods. The WHO envisions that each individual, on a global scale, has long-term access to safe food.

HagaMUN 2026 | 27th, 28th of February and 1st of March
From Awareness to Action: Advancing gender equality in an unequal world

3

Definition of key terms

Codex Alimentarius: The literal translation to *Food Code* or *Food Law*. It is a collection of standards, regulations and codes of practice adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Codex Alimentarius Commission: also known as the CAC, is the central part of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme and was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organisation to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade (WHO).

Foodborne illnesses, also known as food poisoning, are illnesses caused by consuming food contaminated with harmful chemicals or germs, such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites.

Food safety: Food safety is the practice of handling, preparing, and storing food to prevent contamination and foodborne illnesses. To ensure food safety, governments or parties establish effective food safety standards and regulations.

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) is a system where food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical and physical hazards from the production and handling of raw materials to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.

General Overview

Food safety standards refer to the conditions under which food is produced and distributed, with no harm to consumers. While many countries have adequate food safety regulations, unsafe food remains a significant global challenge. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), unsafe food causes approximately 600 million illnesses and 420,000 deaths annually. The implementation of food safety standards helps to lessen the large-scale effects of foodborne illnesses, and by implementing strict laws that discuss and acknowledge the severity of this issue, food safety standards can be developed to ensure that individuals safely consume food in their daily lives. However, reinforcing current food safety standards remains a major challenge today because public trust in major food chain businesses remains strong, despite the numerous outbursts that have impacted the outlook of food safety.

Foodborne illnesses come in various categories, each of them attacking various parts of the body, sometimes in a multifaceted way. A few of the most common foodborne illnesses include Salmonella, Escherichia coli (E.coli), and Norovirus. One of the main reasons why foodborne illnesses is a crucial matter is due to the uneven enforcement of proper food safety standards. Foodborne illnesses are usually infectious or toxic and caused by chemicals or harmful germs, such as bacteria, viruses, or parasites, that enter the body through contaminated food (WHO). Chemical contamination can cause long-term diseases such as life-threatening cancer, proving this issue's major effects and cruciality.

An example that projects the need for the strengthening of food security and the reinforcement of current food safety standards is the major Salmonella outbreak that occurred in the U.S., affecting over 700 people across 46 U.S. states. The outbreak was the most severe foodborne illness incident that had occurred in the U.S., showing how the food safety standards were weak and needed to be further strengthened and enhanced to eliminate outbursts like this. Negligence of the established food safety standards caused a major issue; this outbreak was linked to the Peanut Corporation of America (PCA), and this incident occurred in 2008-2009, where 9 deaths were noted to be in direct relation to contaminated peanut butter. Overall, this contributed to a global push (especially in the U.S.) to recognize and reinforce global food safety standards and enhance food security to prevent major outbursts like this in the future.

Ultimately, the issue of the reduction of foodborne illnesses must immediately be addressed because of its large-scale and severe impacts. Creating stronger and reinforcing current food safety standards can help to lessen, and even minimize the amount of foodborne-outbursts and health issues, protecting the public health and ensuring that the well-being of each individual is being considered.

HagaMUN 2026 | 27th, 28th of February and 1st of March
From Awareness to Action: Advancing gender equality in an unequal world

5

Major parties involved

Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)

Codex Alimentarius Commission develops international food safety, nutrition and quality standards. In 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) called upon members of the WTO to integrate their national regulations to Codex standards, which became the international benchmark for food safety (Food Safety Magazine)

United States of America

The United States of America establishes strong and comprehensive standards through major agencies such as the FDA, enforcing regulations such as the HACCP. The USA promotes educational food safety campaigns such as 'Fight Bac!', which help spread food safety. Several American agencies (FDA, USDA, USAID) come together to discuss and strengthen current food safety standards.

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

According to the European Union, its work consists of gathering scientific data and expertise, providing independent up-to-date scientific advice on food safety issues, cooperating with EU countries, international bodies, and other stakeholders, communicating its scientific work to the public and boosting trust in the EU's food safety system by providing dependable advice. The EFSA helps protect consumers from risks in the food chain.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

The FDA sets Standards of Identity (SOIs) on specific products such as milk, chocolate, breads and peanut butter. These SOIs provide specific details on what these foods must contain and what is optional, and often describe the amount of ingredients or components. The FDA uses advances in science to update standards, ensuring products remain high-quality and safe. The FDA works with foreign governments and agencies such as the WTO to align new food safety standards.

Timeline of events

1963; Establishment of the CAC: It was officially established by the FAO and WHO, with the main goal being to develop international food standards and to protect public health.

1970; Spread of HACCP: By the 1970s, HACCP principles were being spread, taught and integrated into food safety practices.

1995; WTO SPS Agreement: Legally implements Codex standards into trade regulations.

2000; Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI): Establishment of GFSI with the main objective of safe food for everyone everywhere. GFSI strengthened food safety by creating a globally recognised benchmark for standards, leading to harmonised standards.

2011 January 4th; Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA): Gives the FDA preventive controls rather than reactive controls, allowing the FDA to regulate food production, processing and imports.

2022 October 17; Begin of WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022-2030: Start of the global strategy to reduce the burden of foodborne illnesses by ensuring safe food for everyone.

Relevant UN treaties and events

Codex Alimentarius Commission established

It was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organisation to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade (WHO).

1996 World Food Summit

It was convened by the FAO, which brought world leaders together to tackle hunger and malnutrition. It resulted in the adoption of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security. It strengthened food safety standards by defining access to safe food as a fundamental human right.

A/79/443:Agriculture development, food security and nutrition: Addresses the need on improving food safety standards, including food security.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety 2022-2030

This provides a framework to reduce the amount of foodborne illnesses worldwide. It is aimed to be achieved by establishing stronger national food safety standards, improving trade, adapting to global changes in food production and distribution and enhancing collaboration with stakeholders. Its main target is to achieve a 40% reduction in incidences of foodborne diarrheal diseases.

1997 Clinton Food Safety Initiative

This was a federal effort involving several US agencies launched to strengthen the US food safety standards from farm to table. By implementing better coordination and improved inspection, it established mandatory HACCP systems for meat and poultry processors. It also called for the cooperative detection and response effort between the CDC, FDA, USDA and local US agencies called FoodNet.

The Food Safety Act 1990:

The Food Safety Act 1990 served as a cornerstone of existing food safety laws in the UK. It required food businesses to be responsible for confirming that the food they produce was safe to eat. All food businesses had to meet quality expectations for their produced foods. The Food Safety Act of 1990 also established that harmful or misleading food is a criminal offense and it empowered regulations for hygiene, labelling and traceability.

Possible solutions

1. Governments and nations can introduce stricter regulations and implement existing food safety systems, such as HACCP, to protect public health.

2. Enabling consistent state-of-the-art monitoring of food production to track key performance indicators (KIP) in all nations

3. Transition to mandatory digital food safety systems instead of old-fashioned paper log systems. This should replace paper-based logs with digital tracking to monitor key indicators in real time, especially in developing countries in Africa as these nations heavily rely on paper logs due to limited infrastructure.

4. Implement proper hygiene and food safety education in developing nations, primarily in the African Region, using schools, radios, and newspapers to disseminate the information.

5. Pre-existing organizations (such as WHO and CARE International etc.) can work together to fund large-scale projects that affect larger regions to ensure that people all over can be provided with proper healthcare information to stay informed of the health standards being implemented.

6. Implement training programs for people to train the public on how to identify bacteria in their foods and understand the measures to take after identifying them. This will ensure that people will be able to understand how negatively impactful contamination can be and what food safety standards there are to know about. These programs should also inform people on current food safety standards. Delivery methods could include social media, spreading awareness in school, community workshops and radio.

7. Balance fundings according to needs of both MEDCs, LEDCs, and NICs – discuss this with the UN and consider WHO health standards for food safety. This will place urgency on LEDCs while still supporting MEDCs and NICs.