

FOOD SAFETY, A MATTER TO US ALL

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the research and information gathered in time about food safety. The term of food safety is relatively a new one, emerged more intensively in the last century. Food safety is conditioned by multiple factors like climate changes, food availability, public and national health, industry, economy. Even though it may seem it concerns food, food safety includes many more aspects. It aims to draw attention and inspire action to help prevent, detect and manage foodborne risks, contributing to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, tourism and sustainable development. Food safety should concern every human, institution or decision maker.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of food safety has gradually developed over the last decades to include more and more aspects that address the problems of human nutrition from a complex, quantitative and qualitative perspective, including references to health safety, environmental quality, the general socio-economic framework, the risk of armed conflict.

Food safety, according to the literature, refers to ensuring access for everyone to the healthiest possible food, the availability of food and the right of everyone to feed themselves and the desire to have a healthy diet.

Although there have been concerns about the nutritional status of the population since ancient times, it was not until the middle of the last century that the scientific and institutional foundations of contemporary food and nutrition policies were laid down

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This paper is based on the discussions and forums dedicated to the theme of food safety organized by "The Ecological Initiative and Sustainable Development Group" (EISDG) Foundation where I serve as President. The starting point of the forums was to bring together decision-makers and stakeholders, state and other institutions, academia, economic and social circles to work together to find viable short, medium and long-term strategies for food safety.

Food and nutrition policies are represented by a series of objectives, priorities, rules and decisions adopted by the actors and institutions vested with the necessary competences to ensure the economic and social conditions for good individual and public health for the entire population.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Food safety is considered an essential component of the social, economic stability and national security of a country (with or without agricultural potential).

The causes and influences that threaten food safety are: global warming, desertification and land degradation; lack of utilization of own agricultural potential at the expense of excessive imports; lack of a national strategy for food safety; global economic crisis; lack of independence of food safety; different levels of development between regions and countries; price volatility; lack of immediate action; lack of coherent policies; lack of control and traceability along the food chain; lack of control and practical action at the global level; food safety is closely linked to economic growth and social progress as well as to political stability and peace.

Access to safe food is essential for global human health, the environment and wildlife. Of course, from one year to the next, it is envisaged that every citizen regardless of age, country, religion, background, should have equal access to food of a quality and quantity that ensures the nutritional benefits that maintain physical integrity and mental parameters in line with the demands of life in the period in which we live. Safe food, safe ways of producing food have become global policies of growing concern.

The World Food Safety Day is marked every year on June 7, drawing attention to the major risks of food shortages at any given time, as well as the risks of processing food at a level of quality far below the quality required by the market. Food safety is closely linked to human health, so the focus is on raising awareness of the risks of losing much of our food supply precisely because of climate change, but also because of the impassivity of the people in initiating concerted policies to stop wasting food, drinking water and any water resources.



Figure 1. World Food Safety Day Forum: “Safer Food - Better Health”, 7th of June 2022, organized by EISDG Foundation and The Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences Bucharest

Every year, „The Ecological Initiative and Sustainable Development Group” (EISDG) Foundation organizes a forum dedicated to food safety with the aim of

bringing together decision makers, academics, researchers and stakeholders to deter risks and find solutions for a healthy and properly fed population.



Figure 2. Signing the civil proposal for the establishment of the "Research Forum on Food Safety and Food Security".

The 2024 theme "Food safety: prepare for the unpredictable" emphasizes the importance of being prepared for food safety incidents, no matter how mild or severe they may be. Food safety incidents can range from minor events to major international crises, such as a power cut at home, food poisoning in a local restaurant, a voluntary recall of contaminated products by a producer, an outbreak originating from imported products, a natural disaster.

Identifying and managing food risks contributes to food safety, human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access, tourism, sustainable development, and according to the World Health Organization (WHO), we are only facing dramatic situations that can be caused by changes in the global pedoclimatic spectrum. 45% of the world's economy's inputs go into intensive agriculture - processing - distribution - distribution - storage - conservation, as well as maintaining quality in line with the demands of the times. The needs of the future become global food safety policies that recognize the overriding links between the health of people, animals, plants, the environment and the economy.

The term food safety has increasingly made its presence felt in the concerns of Romanians in recent times. Romania is one of the European countries with one of the most extensive land areas in Europe and thus has significant agricultural resources. Romania has significant agricultural areas within the European Union, namely 8% of the arable area (5th position after France, Spain, Germany and Poland) and 8% of the area under permanent pasture (4th position after Spain, France and Germany).

CONCLUSIONS

Given the food crisis that is deepening year by year, accompanied by the energy crisis and extreme drought, the Ecological Initiative and Sustainable Development Group Foundation proposed the creation of a permanent Advisory

Council to the Prime Minister's Office, which would bring to the attention of the Government relevant data on the food situation in Romania, agricultural production, as well as the attraction of European funds to improve resilience programs on food safety connected to global food safety. This proposal, which came from civil society, academia and universities to bring added value to the building of resilience strategies on food safety, was finalized by the registration of the "Research Forum on Food Safety and Food Security" at the Ministry of Justice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The paper is a sum of all themes and subjects of discussion approached in the conferences, seminars and online events organized and attended in the last years.

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