

Food Safety In The European Union And Nutrition Policy

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Key words: food safety standards, European Union, regulation, nutrition policy

ABSTRACT

This article describes the nutrition policy and the regulation of EU food industry and analyses food safety standards. The provision of safe, nutritious, high quality and affordable food to Europe's consumers is the central objective of EU policy, which covers all stages of the EU food supply chain, "from farm to fork". Its standards and requirements aim to ensure a high level of food safety and nutrition within an efficient, competitive, sustainable and innovative global market.

Açar sözlər: ərzaq təhlükəsizliyi standartları, Avropa İttifaqı, tənzimləmə, qidalanma siyasəti

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Bu yazı qidalanma siyasəti və Aİ qida sənayesinin tənzimlənməsini təsvir edir və ərzaq təhlükəsizliyi standartlarını təhlil edir. Avropanın istehlakçıları üçün təhlükəsiz, bəsləyici, yüksək keyfiyyətli və sərfəli qida təmin edilməsi "tarladan süfrəyə" adlı Aİ qida təchizat zəncirinin bütün mərhələlərini əhatə edən Aİ siyasətinin mərkəzi obyektidir. Onun standartları və tələbləri səmərəli, rəqabət qabiliyyətli, davamlı və yenilikçi qlobal bazarda ərzaq təhlükəsizliyi və qidalanmanın yüksək səviyyəsinin təmin edilməsinə yönəlmişdir.

Ключевые слова: стандарты безопасности пищевых продуктов, Европейский Союз, регулирование, политика питания

РЕЗЮМЕ

В данной статье описывается политики в области питания и регулирования пищевой промышленности ЕС и анализирует стандарты безопасности пищевых продуктов. Обеспечение безопасной, питательным, высокое качество и доступными продуктами питания для потребителей Европы является главной целью политики ЕС, которая охватывает все этапы цепочки поставок продовольствия в ЕС, "от фермы до вилки". Его стандарты и требования направлены на обеспечение высокого уровня безопасности пищевых продуктов и питания в рамках эффективной, конкурентоспособной, устойчивой и инновационной мировом рынке.

Every European citizen has the right to know how the food he eats is produced, processed, packaged, labelled and sold. The central goal of the European Commission's Food Safety policy is to ensure a high level of protection of human health regarding the food industry — Europe's largest manufacturing and employment sector. The Commission's guiding principle - primarily set out in its White Paper on Food Safety - is to apply an integrated approach from farm to fork covering all sectors of the food chain. The general principles of food and feed law are outlined in Articles 5 to 10 of the General Food Law Regulation. They form an horizontal framework underpinning all Union and national measures relating to food and feed. They cover all stages of the production, processing and distribution of food as well as feed produced for (or fed to) food-producing animals.

The European Union's food safety policy aims to protect consumers, while guaranteeing the smooth operation of the single market. Dating from 2003, the policy centres on the concept of traceability both of inputs (e.g. animal feed) and of outputs (e.g. primary production, processing, storage, transport and retail sale). The EU has agreed standards to ensure food hygiene, animal health and welfare, and plant health and to control contamination from external substances, such as pesticides. Rigorous checks are carried out at every stage, and imports (e.g. meat) from outside the EU are required to meet the same standards and go through the same checks as food produced within the EU [1]. EU food legislation aims to provide safe, nutritious, high-quality and affordable food to the consumer and is based on an integrated and comprehensive approach that covers all steps of the food and feed chain. The food system, however, is dynamic, constantly influenced and shaped by many factors. Policy-making should, therefore, respond to slow and gradual changes on the one hand, and pressing and rapidly evolving developments on the other. This can only be achieved through preparedness, forward thinking and proactive policy-making. The European Commission aims to assure a high level of food safety and animal and plant health within the EU through coherent farm-to-fork measures and adequate monitoring, while ensuring an effective internal market. The implementation of this approach involves various actions, namely:

- to assure effective control systems and evaluate compliance with EU standards in the food safety and quality, animal health, animal welfare, animal nutrition and plant health sectors within the EU and in third countries in relation to their exports to the EU;
- to manage international relations with third countries and international organisations concerning food safety, animal health, animal welfare, animal nutrition and plant health;
- to manage relations with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and ensure science-based risk management.

Over the past few decades, both industry and governments have shifted the balance of food safety strategies away from reliance on inspection and towards prevention. While this shift is often characterised as a change from

product controls to process controls, it can better be understood in terms of the three regulatory strategies:

1. Performance-based regulation, in which the regulatory authority specifies a particular outcome – for example, that fresh produce should be free of microbial contamination. No particular route to achieving his outcomes is ruled in or out. This option is most efficient when outcomes are clear and easily measurable;

2. Technology-based regulation, which specifies defined rules, procedures or behaviours that should achieve a desired outcome. For example, a rule specifying a minimum separation distance between fresh produce fields and concentrated animal feeding operations is designed to minimise the risk of microbial contamination from animal sources;

3. Management-based regulation, which does not specify specific outputs or processes, but rather requires the regulated firms to produce 'plans to comply with general criteria designed to promote the targeted social goal' [2]. A requirement for food facilities to introduce a hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) would be an example of management-based regulation. Facilities would use HACCP principles to identify risks and devise food safety plans to reduce or eliminate them through mechanisms appropriate to their specific technologies and operations.

The shift towards technology-based and management-based regulation of the food industry and the response of the private sector to it has been most evident in the United Kingdom. As has been discussed by Loader and Hobbs (1999), the European Union (EU) introduced a number of directives relevant to food safety in the 1980s and early 1990s. These included the product-liability directive in 1985, a directive concerning the consistency of inspection and standards across member states in 1989 and a directive on food hygiene in 1993. Member states are obliged to introduce legislation to operationalise directives and the UK Food Safety Act (FSA) in 1990 and the General Hygiene Act (1995) did this in a way that promoted a specific private sector response [3]. The FSA (and, subsequently, the EU's General Food Law of 2002) did not mandate particular policies or procedures to achieve food safety. It did not even mandate implementation of

HACCP systems. Instead, it placed responsibility on food business operators to supply safe food, and it:

extended legal liability for the safety and standards of food to all downstream firms in the food chain, regardless of where the food safety problem originated. This meant that the food retailer could be held liable for selling food that was tainted by the actions of an upstream food manufacturer if the retailer could not show that they had taken all reasonable precautions, i.e. exercised due diligence.

In addition to extending the responsibilities of downstream food business operators, the UK government also increased the reputational risks associated with non-compliance by introducing the ‘naming and shaming’ of companies selling unsafe food [4].

European legislation does not consider ‘functional foods’ or ‘nutraceuticals’ as specific food categories. In the above, a number of legislative texts that may be of importance to such foods have already been elaborated, including the general food Regulation, the Food Supplements Directive, the Novel Food Regulation, and the proposals on Nutrition and Health Claims and on the Addition of Vitamins and Minerals and Other Substances to Foods.

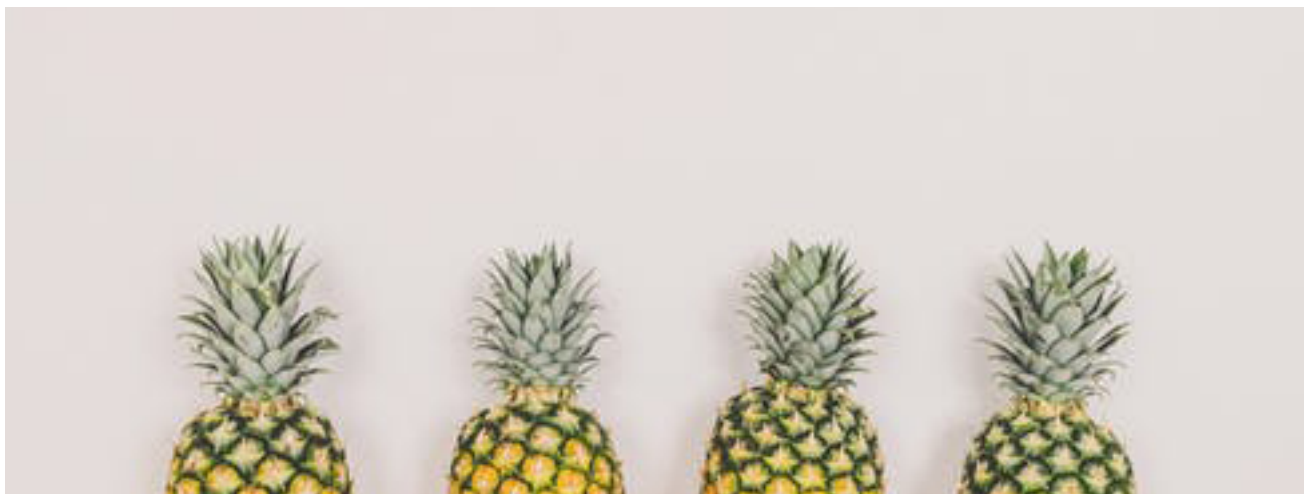
But there is one category of products that has a firmly established legal framework, which is “Foods for Particular Nutritional Uses” (also called PARNUTS or dietetic foods). It offers a good example of a legislation that balances scientific risk assessment, consumer protection, manufacturer responsibility and market innovation in a rather proportionate way [5]. Together with the General Food Law requirements that put primary responsibility of food safety with the food business operator; require them to have in place a system for traceability of the foodstuff and adequate procedures to withdraw the foodstuff from the market they consider or have reason to believe that it is not in compliance with the food safety requirements; and impose a notification duty, i.e. to immediately inform the competent authorities if they consider or have reason to believe that a food which they have placed on the market may be injurious to human health; this would seem to be a balanced way of creating a regulatory framework that fosters both consumer protection and quick innovation as result of scientific developments.

Undernutrition is the physical outcome of food insecurity and repeated infectious diseases. It is responsible for 45% of all deaths of children under five, amounting to 3.1 million preventable child deaths every year. It also causes irreversible impairment of growth and cognitive development for hundreds of millions more children. Around 70% of all undernourished children live in South Asia. Globally, some 51 million children under five suffer from acute undernutrition (wasting syndrome and kwashiorkor) which results in high mortality risk and vulnerability to diseases. The EU funding allocated to nutrition programmes increased by 60% over last six years, representing €130 million in 2014. In-house nutrition expertise has also been reinforced in the past years: regional thematic experts in three regional support offices, a dedicated global expert, a Nutrition Working Group, all reflecting the increasing attention to the nutrition agenda paid by the European Commission. The adoption of an EU policy on nutrition in March 2013 also demonstrates the increasing commitment of the EU towards nutrition. The Staff Working Document, developed by the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), provides clear strategic priorities on the EU response to undernutrition in emergencies, as follows:

- treatment of moderate and severe acute undernutrition;
- tackling the immediate causes of undernutrition through nutrition, health, water and sanitation and food assistance interventions;
- addressing micronutrient deficiencies.

The priorities are translated into concrete policies, such as: providing access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities for families and communities; free access to health care for children and pregnant and lactating mothers; treatment of moderate and severe acute malnutrition through a community-based approach; organising information sessions on appropriate diet and feeding practices; and supporting households in restoring their livelihoods after a disaster [6]. The humanitarian and development aid services (DEVCO) of the European Commission work closely together to ensure joint humanitarian and development programming and hence coherence and complementary in the field of nutrition.

Food and nutrition education is identified as a



cornerstone of any society that aspires to have a healthy population, along with crucial backing by governance that – together with policy-makers, industry and the society – maintains nutrition and health high on the agenda.

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Ключевые слова: стандарты безопасности пищевых продуктов, Европейский Союз, регулирование, политика питания

Резюме

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