

Editorial

World Health day 2015- Food Safety

“From Firm to Plate make Food Safe”

World Health Day celebrated on 7th. April, with WHO highlighting the challenges and opportunities associated with food safety under the slogan “From Firm to Plate make Food Safe.”

Food production has been industrialized and its trade and distribution have been globalized. These changes introduce multiple new opportunities for food to become contaminated with harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites, or chemicals.

A local food safety problem can rapidly become an international emergency. Investigation of an outbreak of food borne disease is vastly more complicated when a single plate or package of food contains ingredients from multiple countries.

Unsafe food can contain harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites, or chemical substances, and cause more than 200 diseases – ranging from diarrhea to cancers. Examples of unsafe food include undercooked foods of animal origin, fruits and vegetables contaminated with faeces, and shellfish containing biotoxins.

Efforts to prevent such emergencies can be strengthened, however, through development of robust food safety systems that drive collective government and public action to safeguard against chemical or microbial contamination of food. Global and national level measures can be taken, including using international platforms, like the joint WHO-FAO International Food safety Authorities Network (INFOSCAN), to ensure effective and rapid communication during food safety emergencies.

At the consumer end of the food supply chain, the public plays important roles in promoting food safety, from practicing safe food hygiene and learning how to take care when cooking specific foods that may be hazardous (like raw chicken), to reading the labels when buying and preparing food. The WHO Five Keys to Safer food explain the basic principles that each individual should know all over the world to prevent food borne diseases.

It often takes a crisis for the collective consciousness on food safety to be stirred and any serious response to be taken. The impacts on public health and economies can be great. A sustainable response, therefore, is needed that ensures standards, checks and networks are in place to protect against food safety risks.

WHO is working to ensure access to adequate, safe, nutritious food for everyone. The Organization supports countries to prevent, detect and respond to food borne diseases outbreaks- in line with the Codex Alimentarius, a collection on International food standards, guidelines and codes of practice covering all the main foods.

Food safety is a cross-cutting issue and shared responsibility that requires participation of non-public health sectors (i.e. agriculture, trade, and commerce, environment, tourism) and support of major international and regional agencies and organizations active in the fields of food, emergency aid, and education.

– R. N. Haldar
