

EFFECTS OF THE U.S. FOOD SAFETY CONTROL SYSTEM: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The incidence of foodborne diseases is globally increasing and international food trade is disrupted by frequent disputes over food safety and quality requirements. In response to growing food safety issues, the laws, policies and standards regarding food safety and quality management have been developed for the U.S food industry. In order for the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act to be effectively complied by the foreign food facilities, this study examines the historical changes to the food safety system in the U.S and proposes that the number of the third-party accreditation agencies should be increased in order to provide more opportunities for examination of foreign food facilities.

Keywords: Food Safety Modernization Act, Imported Foods, Foreign Food Facilities

INTRODUCTION

Food safety is an increasingly important public health issue. According to the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), the United States is the country that leads the world in food safety management in terms of food production, import, export, and distribution [2]. Food quality, including safety, is a major concern facing the U.S. food industry today. The U.S. must assure their citizens of a safe food supply from within and outside of the country, and today's challenges are posed by modern food threats, quickly evolving food production technologies, and the globalization of food supply. The purpose of this review is to examine the historical changes to the food safety system in the U.S. and provide strategies to promote the U.S. food safety system as a global initiative.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points: HACCP

In 1994, the United States established HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points), a food safety management system through the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). HACCP, widely acknowledged as the best method of assuring product safety, has become internationally recognized as a tool for controlling food born safety hazards [1]. HACCP has been the premier voluntary and preventive control system for ensuring the safety of food in the world since 1994. It has provided many countries an opportunity to gradually change the risk and safety control system for food that is a shift from passive and reactive actions to autonomous and proactive.

The Bioterrorism Act

The Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act (The Bioterrorism Act/BTA) was passed by Congress in 2002 in response to the events of September 11, 2001 which highlighted the need to enhance the overall security of the U.S. food supply. The act was designed to improve the food safety efforts of the FDA in cooperation with U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agents (CBP), both were given new authority to protect the nation's food supply against terrorist acts and other threats. But, these agencies weren't given the power to create new regulations or act on innovation in materials, technology, or newly discovered hazard factors related to the production and distribution of food. The regulators were granted full responsibility but only to the extent necessary to meet the purpose of laws [3].

Food Safety Modernization Act: FSMA

The primary content of the Bioterrorism Act is further embodied in the "Food Safety Modernization Act", which was enacted on January 4, 2011. This Act is regarded as the largest reform of the food safety management system in the United States over last 70 years. It aims to ensure the U.S. food supply is safe by shifting the focus from responding to contamination to preventing it. The act enables the FDA to better protect public health and food safety by giving the FDA unprecedented authority to issue mandatory recalls, create new regulations, and to provide the industry with guidance documentation for minimizing food safety hazards. One of the most crucial authorities given to the FDA is the authorization to ensure imported foods meet the same safety standards as foods produced in the U.S. [3].

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The new standards set by the FSMA have made a vast impact on foreign food facilities exporting to the U.S. as well as domestic food facilities [3]. The FDA is responsible to investigate whether or not foreign food facilities are in compliance with a multitude of U.S. regulations. The FDA can reject the importation of food made by foreign food facilities based on FSMA (2011). From the perspective of foreign food facilities which want to export to the U.S., the FDA's inspection of foreign food facilities could be considered as a required process. In order for the U.S. FSMA to be effectively complied by the foreign food facilities, this study provides two strategies. First, educational materials should be easily understandable and culturally sensitive, which will strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the U.S. and other countries. Second, the number of the third-party accreditation agencies should be increased in order to provide more opportunities for examination of foreign food facilities. This clarification and strengthening of the importer's responsibility for food safety is the centerpiece of the new law's import safety reform.

REFERENCES

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