

HLPE REPORT

Role of Food Safety in ensuring food safety, access to adequate nutrition, and improved health outcomes

The SDGs incorporate food safety into the targets of Agenda 2030 yet the role of food safety has received startlingly little attention in the debates on food security, nutrition and health outcomes. Food safety has a tremendous impact on all three. As the World Health Organisation says, “Food safety, nutrition and food security are inextricably linked. Unsafe food creates a vicious cycle of disease and malnutrition, particularly affecting infants, young children, elderly and the sick. Foodborne diseases impede socioeconomic development by straining health care systems, and harming national economies, tourism and trade.”

An HLPE report on this topic would provide a greater understanding of the key drivers and consequences of these changes, as well as pathways to address the potential challenges they might pose to food security and nutrition. A particular focus should be on capacity building for all actors in the agri-food chain, including farmers, processors, distributors, and retailers, to ensure that they have the resources and knowledge necessary to minimize consumer risks with regards to food safety. A distinct but related challenge will be to ensure food safety while guaranteeing that producers, including smallholders, have access to local and regional markets, and without negatively impacting traditional production and retailing systems, upon which many of the lowest-income consumers depend.

CFS has the capacity to lend expertise and coherence to help reduce the harmful human and economic impacts of unsafe food. Nutrition-specific interventions, policies and programs throughout food systems - from production to consumption - cannot be achieved if food safety is compromised. Equally, overall food production is not sufficient if the food is not safe to eat.

Contribution to the achievement of the SDGs:

This topic is in line with SDG target 2.1:

2.1 by 2030 end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

Relevance and global impact

An estimated 600 million – almost 1 in 10 people in the world – fall ill after eating contaminated food and 420 000 die every year, resulting in the loss of 33 million healthy life years (DALYs). Children under 5 years of age carry 40% of the food borne disease burden, with 125 000 deaths every year. (source: WHO and FAO) Farmers who have product rejected due to food safety issues face loss of income and unsafe food creates a waste stream with environmental consequences.

CFS value added and contribution to CFS objectives

CFS has helped to advance the discussion of food systems, expanding the understanding that food production and nutrition are linked. Food safety is cited in the SDGs but has received relatively little attention compared to total caloric food security and to nutrition. Studies on the impact of food safety have been conducted, as well as standard setting, and measures to treat food borne diseases. CFS can assist by commissioning the HLPE to produce a report which will review interventions that can help to improve food safety with

positive consequences for social, economic and environmental impacts. This will lead to a greater understanding of the role of food safety in food security and nutrition, and of the eventual challenges faced by stakeholders in promoting it.

No duplication

Addressing the nexus of food safety, nutrition and health has not been addressed. While food safety standards are discussed at a global level, a discussion of the ways to improve food safety through interventions in production, storage, handling and consumption are not as fully understood nor implementable by small holders.

Key Potential Outcomes

A CFS process and HLPE report could help to:

- a) Identify policy processes to improve co-ordination on food safety. Most work is currently focused on food safety standards which are essential and need to be supported by policies that enable improvements across the food value chain
- b) Food supply chains now cross multiple national borders. Good collaboration between governments, producers and consumers helps ensure food safety.
- c) Identify key infrastructure such as cold chains, storage technologies, better testing capacity, crop protection, and animal health to improve food safety
- d) Develop collaborative groups focused on food safety
- e) Articulate capacity building and training, with a focus on smallholders, to meet food safety standards
- f) Embed food safety in nutrition programmes globally, with a particular emphasis on addressing stunting (SDG target 2.2)
- g) Articulate specific subsets of food safety problems, including aflatoxins
- h) Foster education on food safety especially at the household and farm levels.