Changing Public Health Issues in CODEX

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International Association of Consumer Food Organizations
IACFO (Founded in 1997)

The International Association of Consumer Food Organizations (IACFO) is an association of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that represent consumer interests in the areas of nutrition, food safety, and related food policy matters.

CSPI (Founded in 1971)

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) has 900,000 consumer members in both the U.S. and Canada, who fund our work to help establish nutrition and health policy through education, activism, publications (Nutrition Action HealthLetter) and litigation.
The Environment Where We Operate

- Consumers clearly benefit from safer food
- Food trade is growing exponentially
- Trade presents opportunities and challenges
- Consumer reactions to trade
In 1938, pathogens in milk constituted 25% of all disease outbreaks linked to food in the U.S.

Nationwide program requiring pasteurization for products sold in “interstate commerce”

Today milk outbreaks are less than 1%.
Exponential Growth of Food Trade

Increase in Selected Food Imports 1970-2011
Imports for Consumption by Volume

Source: Dept. of Commerce
Note: Data not available for seafood in 1970
Opportunities and Challenges

Developing countries increasingly supply U.S. food imports, 1998-2007

Percent import growth

Countries in descending order of Gross Domestic Product per capita


Increase in Food Imports

Border Inspection. Very little imported food is inspected by FDA at the border. As imports increase, the agency struggles to keep up.
Consumer Participation in Codex

- Legitimacy of the consumer voice
- Transparency of process both at the national and international level
- Relationship between committees and expert panels
  - JECFA, JMPR, JEMRA
- Protection of sensitive groups: Children, elderly, the immune compromised, those with chronic disease
The role of science and other factors related to the health protection of consumers and the promotion of fair practices in food trade was a very important, fundamental structural issue that had to be worked out. Many viewed "the promotion of fair practices in food trade" as synonymous with promoting trade – but that's entirely different than promoting fair practices which is a consumer issue.
Changes in Consumer Perceptions of Risk

- Evolution from visible to invisible hazards
  - Packaging, labeling, weights
  - Food additives, pesticide residues, drug residues
  - Microbial hazards, parasites, animal diseases
Consumer Interest in Information and Labeling

- Nutrition labeling
- Organic labeling
- Allergens in food
Technologies/Concerns and Consumer Acceptance

- Food additives
- Novel food ingredients
- Biotechnology
- Irradiation
Animal Diseases and Hazards

- BSE
- Avian/Swine Influenza
- Common pathogens in food
- Antibiotic resistant pathogens in food animals
Emerging Concerns and Priorities

- Food fraud, e.g. Melamine
- Climate change
- Food security and access to water
- Fresh, natural, local . . . and safe
Focus of Consumers in Codex

Risk Communication

- Labeling
- Recall

Risk Management
Evaluating the Codex documents’ effectiveness for controlling known hazards

Risk Assessment
Ensuring consideration of information at the consumer end of the supply chain
Final thoughts

“The world is in transition from an era of food abundance to one of scarcity. Over the last decade, world grain reserves have fallen by one third. World food prices have more than doubled, triggering a worldwide land rush and ushering the new geopolitics of food. Food is the new oil. Land is the new gold.”

Thank you!

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