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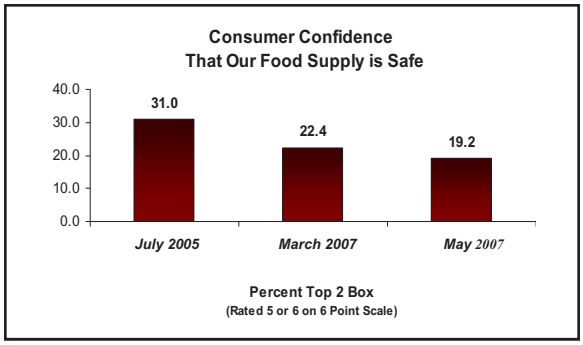
SYSCO

Food Safety – Losing our Confidence

By Jean Kinsey, Director

Three nationwide consumer surveys conducted by The Food Industry Center verify that as headlines about food safety incidents increase, consumers are losing confidence in the safety of our food supply (See chart). A 38 percent decline in consumer confidence between August 2005 and April 2007 is significant. Furthermore, declines occurred across all segments of the population.



Source: Dennis Degeneffe, "Tracking Consumer Perceptions of Bioterrorism and Food Safety Risks."

Reasons for this drop in confidence are several and the consequences diverse. In the fall of 2006, we saw *E. coil* 0157:H7 showing up in fresh vegetables (spinach and lettuce). We formerly associated this pathogen with ground meat where it could be rendered harmless by adequate cooking, unlike fresh produce. Fresh spinach was distributed nationwide and rapidly. Outbreaks of illness occurred in 26 states affecting 204 people, 31 of whom contracted the serious hemolytic uremic syndrome and three died. In a rare move, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), with no power to mandate a recall, asked consumers not to eat fresh spinach and to dispose of any they had at home. Five months after the incident, sales of fresh bagged spinach were still down 27% (http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/June07/Features/Spinach.htm).

After the February 2007 recall of peanut butter involving salmonella in several national brands, consumers were beginning to worry about canned and dry food products, according to our surveys. In April 2007, the pet food contamination problem arose, with melamine being added to wheat gluten from China in order to boost the amount of nitrogen, a marker for the protein quality of wheat gluten. Awareness of the pet food incident was especially high; ninety percent of consumers had heard about the pet food recall, more than any other food recall mentioned in the June 2007 survey. The pet food incident prompted a flurry of questions about the safety of imported food and is partially responsible for a "buy local" movement in many U.S. cities. It is also partially responsible for the Executive Initiative on Import Safety of July 7, 2007, which established multi-agency task forces to revise and refine import monitoring protocols. In November 2007, the FDA published a new Food Protection Plan which would give them new powers to mandate a recall when a voluntary recall failed (http://www.fda.gov/oc/initiatives/advance/food/plan.html).

It is vital that we restore confidence in the safety of our food system. When consumers fear the very food they eat, they begin to take individual measures to avoid otherwise healthy foods. They collectively ask their public representatives to pass laws such as "country of origin labeling," banning of genetically modified ingredients (in Europe), or mandating inspections of imports. These fixes are attractive, but simple band aids, and do not fix the food safety problem. It is incumbent upon everyone involved in the food supply chain, including consumers, to implement food safety measures. This will help reverse the slide in consumer confidence, protect consumers' health and safety, and restore viability to a global food supply chain.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Branding Beyond Borders
2008 Spring Conference

Thursday, March 27, 2008
1:30 - 5:00 pm
McNamara Alumni Center
University of Minnesota

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Director's Column

This column is dedicated to Dr. Benjamin Senauer, the Co-Director of TFIC for the past seven years. Dr. Senauer stepped down from the position effective September 2007, but remains active in TFIC research and events and the Sloan Foundation's Industry Studies Program. While he was Co-Director he led research projects and forums related to healthy foods and healthy people. Specifically, he organized our Fall 2003 Symposium, *Steps to Healthy Living: Starts with Good Lifestyle Habits,* that looked at the rise in obesity in society. The discussion focused on how food companies can be part of the solution to this problem, not only the object of blame. At the Fall 2007 Symposium, *The Future and Practice of Healthy Foods,* he presented results from his research on school lunch programs with the intent of identifying economically viable solutions to unhealthy and unappetizing school lunches. Working with two Minnesota school districts (Hopkins and St. Paul), he and his graduate students and colleague Ford Runge found that children will choose healthy foods when they are presented in schools and that healthy foods can be presented within a school lunch program's budget.

Ben is known for taking on important, current issues in his research and educational programs. More recently, he has been investigating the impact of using grains to produce ethanol. Food and agricultural companies, food prices, healthy living and environmental concerns come together at the juncture of food, feed, energy independence and climate warming. Ben has been spending considerable time writing (*Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2007) and speaking (MPR, CNN and others) about the impact of the energy crisis and environmental concerns on the food industry. He is organizing a Sloan Foundation sponsored workshop on these issues for next spring that will involve academics from several Sloan Industry Study Centers such as those who study automobiles, airlines, electricity and others.

Ben's dedication to TFIC has paid off in many ways, large and small. We cannot count them all. He has kept us focused on our mission. He helped us design ways for industry leaders from across the food supply chain and academics to work together, to learn to trust each other, and to conduct an honest dialogue about issues that concern the health of consumers as well as the health of food businesses.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Ben Senauer for his help, encouragement and support over the many years we have worked together, but especially during the past seven years while he was Co-Director of The Food Industry Center.

For more information about Ben Senauer's work see (http://foodindustrycenter.umn.edu/BenSenauer)

Best Practices for Companies in the Food Supply Chain

A Diagnostic Tool to Benchmark Practices in Food Defense

Confidential & Free

Answer 42 questions • Compare your company to the industry's best average • Compare your companies operating units against each other • Find out if you are ready and resilient to a potential terrorist attack

Go to http://webapps.cfans.umn.edu/TFIC/Main/index.html

The Future and Practice of Healthy Foods Symposium

On October 1, 2007, The Food Industry Center presented its Fall Symposium, "The Future and Practice of Healthy Foods." Leaders from the food industry, academia, and the public sector discussed sustainable and healthy food systems, and the efforts currently underway to make the food supply system in the United States safer, healthier, less wasteful, more sensitive to the environment, and more egalitarian.

Schnieders, Kinsey & Senauer at keynote discussion

In the **keynote conversation with Rick Schnieders, CEO and Chairman of SYSCO,** Schnieders noted the "requirements for food should be: safe, healthy, tasty, raised in an environmentally sensitive way, interesting and ***egalitarian."*** Furthermore, we can offer affordable foods because we have adequate supply, and a supply chain that moves products to consumers innovatively. Finally, we must integrate the distribution system into the supply chain of healthy food.

Symposium Key Messages:

- We are at the front edge of the "carbon footprint" discussion.
- Sustainability is not a niche market; it must be mainstream and affordable.
- Rising food prices are due to rising incomes around the world creating an increase in the demand for animal proteins (meat and milk), in turn, using up surplus production of grains. Using food stock for biofuels contributes to this issue.
- Healthy school lunches are not more expensive and children will eat them.
- Three tenets to follow in order to implement plans for healthier food: 1) follow the money, 2) follow the waste, and 3) follow the imports to the origin.
- Inspecting and monitoring the health of food at its original point of production and processing, even in a foreign country, is needed to improve food safety.

The pdf version of the Symposium Summary can be found at http://foodindustrycenter.umn.edu/past events.

TFIC Presents Research on RFID Use in the Food Industry

Ghosh

The Food Industry Center participated in the third annual meeting of "RFID: Integrated Supply Chains Symposium" convened at Baylor University in Waco, TX on September 27-28, 2007. Koel Ghosh, TFIC Research Associate presented her research on 'RFID and the Food Industry.' Ghosh's research uses data from the National Center for Food Protection and Defense Benchmarking Survey, interviews with select firms in the food industry, and reports from trade journals and business publications to understand the rate of adoption of RFID in the food supply chain.

Ghosh's research found that food industry RFID use is motivated by elements like retailer mandates, brand protection, and retail shrink. The following results emerged from the research on 288 firms:

- 17.5 % of firms responded they were using RFID to track their food products;
- the largest proportion of usage was seen among the logistic and transportation firms (41%), followed by Retail and Wholesale firms (16%), and the least usage was reported for Manufacturing firms (12%);
- 65% of the RFID user firms had annual revenues in excess of $1 billion, and 57% of firms tended to be global and 35% national in their supply chain scopes;
- and 65 % of food firms using RFID were dealing with cold chain products.

Further results showed the cost of the technology matters and it is not just the cost of tags or integrators. Labor costs generated by business, alteration practices, or the replacements costs of active tags are often large enough to influence usage decisions. Finally, RFID enthusiasts within the food industry see value in the creation and management of knowledge generated by RFID information.

TFIC would like to acknowledge Richard Mosley (C.H. Robinson) and Mark McCormick (Cargill Meat Solutions) for their cooperation in this research. ***A copy of this presentation is posted on-line at http://foodindustrycenter.umn.edu/CurrentArticles or for more on RFID use in the food industry, contact Koel Ghosh at ghosh023@umn.edu.***

Did You Know?

Women's Cooking Time?
Women who work full-time were found to spend 38-46 minutes per day preparing food compared to those who are not in the labor force. They spend 70 minutes a day, almost twice as much time. Being single decreases cooking time by 15 minutes a day. A study by the Economic Research Service also shows that low income women who receive higher wages do not change the time they cook. ("Who has Time to Cook? ERS, USDA (http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/err40/)

Genetically Modified Crops
The U.S. has 59% of the world's acres of genetically modified crops followed by Argentina with 20%. In the U.S. in 2005, the percent of acres devoted to GM crops was 52% of cotton, 35% of corn, and 87% of soybeans. The biggest reasons for this adoption are the quest for higher yields and customer acceptance. (http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib11/eib11c.pdf)

Calories Away From Home
Between 1970s and 1990s the share of total calories eaten increased from 18% to 32% while the share of the food dollar spent by households for food-away-from-home increased from 34% to almost 50%. There results are based on a study of 700 consumers in New Jersey in 2002. (http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib19/eib19_reportsummary.pdf)

Food Security – Hunger in the U.S.
Almost 11 % of U.S. households were food insecure at least some time during 2006. "About one-third of food insecure households (4.0 percent of all U.S. households) had very low food security—meaning that the food intake of one or more adults was reduced and their eating patterns were disrupted at times during the year because the household lacked money and other resources for food." Half of these households participated in a government food and nutrition program such as food stamps or free school lunch or breakfast.
(http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR49/)

Quiz:
Several food ingredients or chemical have been in the food news in 2007. See if you can match these with the products with which they were associated.

1. Melamine 2. Tryptophan
3. Carbon Monoxide 4. Omega-3,
5. Aldicarb

a. Turkey b. Fresh Ginger c. Pet food
d. Eggs e. Red meat

Answers:
1. c 2. a 3. e 4. d 5. b

Hormel Foods is New Sponsoring Member of TFIC

The Food Industry Center is pleased to announce that Hormel Foods has become a new Sponsoring Member company.

The Hormel Foods Corporation, based in Austin, MN, is a multinational manufacturer and marketer of consumer-branded food and meat products, many of which are among the best known and trusted in the food industry. The company leverages its extensive expertise, innovation and high competencies in pork and turkey processing and marketing to bring quality, value-added brands to the global marketplace.

In each of the past eight years, Hormel Foods was named one of "The 400 Best Big Companies in America" by Forbes magazine. The company enjoys a strong reputation among consumers, retail grocers, foodservice and industrial customers for products highly regarded for quality, taste, nutrition, convenience and value. For more information, visit www.hormelfoods.com.

Sponsoring Member benefits include:

- Senior Executive representation on TFIC's Board of Executives
- Early access to research findings on crucial issues confronting our industry;
- Active partnership in building a program that educates tomorrow's industry leaders;
- Industry input to shape TFIC's agenda and to maximize the Center's value to the industry and society;
- Direct access to interns and future employees educated about the food industry;
- Membership on TFIC's Program Leadership Board.

For more information on Sponsoring Membership, please contact Rand Park at rpark@umn.edu.

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact Lisa Jore at The Food Industry Center, 317 COB 1994 Buford Ave, St. Paul, MN 55108 or 612.625.7019.