

CONCLUSION

Foodborne illnesses represent a major and daily health threat in all countries, from the most to the least developed. Recent trends in global food production, processing, distribution, and preparation are creating a growing demand by consumers for effective, coordinated, and proactive national food safety systems. Those programs are essential to protect consumer health and protect national economies from trade disruptions.

Food safety programs should:

- cover the entire food chain from production to consumption
- take into account both naturally occurring, and deliberate threats of contamination
- consider national, regional, and international specificities and requirements
- involve consumers and be transparent

Governments play critical roles in protecting the food supply. However, many countries are poorly equipped to respond to existing and emerging food safety problems. They lack technical and financial resources, effective institutional frameworks, trained personnel, and sufficient information about the hazards and risks involved. To improve food safety, governments should:

- have up-to-date food legislation and regulations that address global concerns, as well as specific national and regional needs
- have inspection and food surveillance programs to inform and enforce legislation and regulations
- increase health surveillance to ensure the availability of reliable data on which to base risk-management decisions
- provide for regulatory oversight that extends from farm to table
- promote systems of preventative controls within the food industry, such as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System (HACCP)
- undertake intensive efforts to educate the food industry, food-handlers, and consumers

Placing food safety on the political agenda as a priority in public health is the first step toward reducing foodborne illness. In that regard, it is critical to develop the support and coordination of all concerned partners: national

agencies, international organizations, health and education sectors, industries, farmers, and consumer groups.

By sharing their national experiences and knowledge, consumer groups can participate vigorously in policy debates and reduce the serious adverse effects of foodborne diseases worldwide.