



Impacts of COVID-19 on Food Safety and Employee Health

Patra Shuyi*

Department of Food Safety, University of Maryland Extension, Maryland, USA

DESCRIPTION

More than 200 nations and areas have been impacted by the genuine epidemic known as COVID-19. The fatality rate is anticipated to exceed 4.5 million, according to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. One of the top priorities for the affected countries has been ensuring a consistent supply of high-quality and safe food for their citizens despite the social and economic disruptions brought on by the pandemic. This is in addition to developing and implementing an efficient public health response to slow the spread of COVID-19. All facets of the food supply chain have been impacted by COVID-19's interruptions, including farms, processors, distributors, retailers, restaurants, and consumers.

The local government's stay-at-home directives initially caused a sharp decline in the demand for meals from restaurants and other food service establishments, such as school kitchens. Many farms are dependent on the demand for fresh produce and meat from food service establishments, both directly and indirectly. Some farms were initially compelled to discard significant amounts of the food they produced before eventually figuring out how to divert their products to other food access points. Perishable foods were the most impacted, and many food producers that relied on food service clients suffered significant losses of produced goods. Obtaining materials to switch from bulk food service-oriented forms to those sized for the consumer was another problem with packaging. Because more people are keeping and cooking food at home, there is a significant rise in demand for items that are shelf-stable, such as canned foods and wheat. The food industry struggled to find enough quantities of high-quality and secure raw materials as well as other supplies like packaging and cleaning agents as nations closed their borders and scaled back business operations. The food sector was also in charge of ordering an adequate amount of face masks and hand sanitizers so that the COVID-19 mitigation actions required safeguard workers may be implemented. Even while local governments and communities finally supported the purchase of face masks and hand sanitizer, the food sector had to alter its manufacturing schedule in order to deal with the

restricted supply of other commodities. The sorts of food goods produced, the product compositions, and the packaging all underwent modifications, each posing a distinct problem. Some of the modifications adopted by the food sector were backed by legislative reforms involving labelling and end users. For instance, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) relaxed the criteria for nutritional labelling information and let shelled eggs that were intended for processing to be sold at retail instead.

In addition to the disruption of the food supply chain, the food industry was also negatively impacted by overall labour shortages. COVID-19 drove labour shortages caused by lengthy isolation of employees due to infection or quarantine because of potential exposure. COVID-19 has indirect effects on the labour market as well. Early on in the pandemic, several employees skipped work out of fear of contracting the disease or following an outbreak at their workplace. Because the temporary federal and state COVID-19 unemployment assistance programmes offered benefits that were equal to wages in the food sector, some people who had lost their jobs elected not to hunt for new employment, which decreased the pool of employees from which the food business could employ. The remaining food workers were then expected to take on additional duties, frequently in addition to their usual duties and working hours.

Food companies have established COVID-19 policies to reduce the danger of COVID-19 transmission to their staff and to examine how these COVID-19 measures may affect these organisations commitment to food safety. Money, time, and human resources are finite for businesses and these extraordinary upheavals and the ensuing resource demands can make it difficult for even the well-funded companies to run successfully. Although many food corporations anticipate returning to less stressful operations after COVID-19, this pandemic has brought to light the vulnerability of our global food supply system. Many specialists have toned down their optimism following the COVID outbreak by pointing out that future pandemics of comparable or higher intensity are feasible during our lifetime and may even be more likely given our increasingly linked globe. To make sure they can successfully deliver consistent, safe, and nutrient-dense foods in the face of

Correspondence to: Patra Shuyi, Department of Food Safety, University of Maryland Extension, Maryland, USA, E-mail: patrashuyti907@gmail.com

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upcoming global disruptions, the food industry must critically assess both the effectiveness of the practises they have implemented in their facilities to control COVID-19 and the

potential gaps their implementation has caused in other core business.