
FOOD SAFETY ISSUE IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

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INTRODUCTION

Microbiological, chemical and radiological contamination of food can hurt human health and cause large public health problems. The availability of food in sufficient quantities, of a good quality, accurately labelled and microbiologically, and chemically safe minimizes the risk to human health from the food borne diseases and supports the increase of food trade.

In general agriculture in FR Yugoslavia has the capacity to produce basic commodities in quantities not only sufficient to meet domestic needs. The agricultural production and the food processing industry products of the country, are essential sources of food for the population. Nevertheless in the domestic market many imported foodstuffs are available. Related to the well known political and socioeconomic events (including sanctions and NATO intervention), the standard of living of the population deteriorated sharply. The most basic food items have become increasingly unaffordable, particularly for the vulnerable, low income segments of the domestic population, as well as for the refugees and expels from Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia and Kosovo and Metohia. During this period which has not been ended yet, many humanitarian agencies have been engaged in providing remarkable amounts of food for these people. Despite all hardships of the recent decade, the food safety control system sustained due to recognition that this system is of special importance for the public health.

FOOD SAFETY LEGISLATION

In FR Yugoslavia legal framework which ensures food safety is wide and has been based on internationally recognized scientific research. For the preparation and the enforcement of the food, drinking water and consumer goods safety is responsible the Federal Government, including the Federal Ministry for Health, Social Policy and Welfare, the Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Federal Ministry for Trade and, Federal Ministry for Economics. The leading institution responsible for this issue is Federal Ministry for Health, Social Policy and Welfare which is responsible for the preparation and implementation several laws currently in force: Law on foods and consumer goods safety (Official Journal 53/91), Law on population protection from infectious diseases (Official Journal 46/96) and Law on population protection from radiation (Official Journal 46/96). Those laws and related sublets regulations incorporate, with the full acceptance the food standards, code of

hygienic practice, JECFA recommendations of the tolerant levels of chemical contaminants, additives and radionuclides, as well as the criteria of microbiological contamination's of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Federal Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for the preparing food quality standards, which are also based on the standards of Codex Alimentarius Commission, and for the preparing and enforcing the claims of the Law on lifestoc protection from infections diseases (Official Journal 43/86).

For the implementation of the claims of the above mentioned legislation, on the federal level (import and export), are responsible Federal trade inspection service, Federal sanitary inspection service and Federal veterinary and fito sanitary inspection service. For the implementation of all this regulations in the domestic market are responsible relevant Republic inspections services, respectively.

NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

In 1989 due to initiative of Federal Institute of Public Health, The annual food safety monitoring programme was established as a part of the Federal Statistical Health Program. Relating to the esblished methodology, the all laboratories which were named for the food safety testing by the Federal Ministry for Health, Social Policy and Welfare are engaged to notice the obtained results and to send them to the district Public Health Institute. The data for the whole country are collected in the Federal Institute of Public Health. Through this statistical system are collected the data on 22 food items (bread, milk, milk products, meat, meat products, vegetable, processed vegetable etc) which were tested on the quality standards parameters as well as on the parameters of food safety which include parameters of microbiological (E coli, Salmonella, Streptococcus aureus, Proteus etc) and chemical safety (residues of heavy metals, pesticides, mycotoxines etc).

In order to obtain the data of the etiologic spectrum of food borne diseases in the country according to the Law on infections diseases, in 1984 started the notification system of every case of food poisoning caused by Salmonella, Clostridium botulinum, Clostridium perfringens, Schigella, Streptococcus aureus, B. cereus, Klebsiella, Citro bacter, and E. coli and other conditionally pathogenic bacteria Throughout this system also are collected the data on food borne diseases outbreaks. This statistical system includes the two parallel ways of reporting. The fist one is the Reporting System of Foodbarne Infections and Intoxication. Every case of suspected Foodbarne incident and outbreak has to be notified and to be reported to the public health authority and to the district Public Health Institute. The second one is the Rapid System of Notification on Infectious Diseases, which also includes the notification of the food borne disease. Through this system the all important and serious causes has to be reported to the regional health authorities, by phone or fax, immediately. All this data reach to the Federal Institute of Public Health Epidemiological Department. This department is in the contact with the WHO Surveillance Program for the Control of Food Borne Infectious and Intoxications Collaborative Center in Berlin.

RISK CHARACTERIZATION

Majority of investigations conducted in FR Yugoslavia yield no proper and accurate results on contaminants and additives consumption. Very few studies related to this issue provided

the data of complete biomonitoring of the certain contaminants. They induced total exposure of the target groups to the contaminants originated from air, water and food, daily intake, daily excretion, cumulating in the tissues and adverse effects on health . Also very few studies, some of them now are going on, are designed to investigate daily intake of the heavy metals (lead, cadmium and mercury) as well as the daily intake of some micronutrients (Fe, Zn, Cu, Mn, Cz). According to the preliminary data, average daily intake of these micronutrients is insufficient among the target groups (preschool children). Due to compulsive system of universal salt iodination, which was established in 1951, in Federal Republic Yugoslavia according the criterion of ICCIDD, iodine deficit disorder are practically eliminated.

HARMONIZATION TO THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

The representatives of the country participated and signed all documents adapted by GATT Uruguay Round. Related to the well known events further participation of varies experts in the relevant international bodes dialed with food safety issue sharply were reduced. Afterwards only modest efforts has been done by the Federal Government, to harmonize all relevant regulations of food safety with to the WTO SPS Agreement which was related to the food import and export procedures.

The Federal Government, in 1996 adopted the conclusion that the food safety legislation of the country would be adjusted to the proposals of the EU White Paper 1995.

The prepared draft of the Law on food safety is based on the Council Directive 43/93 EEC, General Requirements of food Hygiene (HACCP), JECFA recommendations on food additives and contaminants, and ISO-standards the criteria for food safety laboratory investigations.