

## Food Safety Research During the Trial Implementation of Food Hygiene Law: Based on Analyzing of China Food News

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### Abstract

Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation) was promulgated on July 1, 1983. China Food News started its first publication on January 1, 1984. This research is to study the conditions of the food safety problems, causes, developing trends and improvements from 1984-1995, through analyzing the reports concerning the food safety issues of China Food News within that period, which is roughly consistent with the enforcement of Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation). Through analyzing the backgrounds of food safety incidents, this research is also trying to find out further reasons of food safety problems and relationships between food safety and social economic developments, seeking effective way to solve food safety problems, providing experiences for improving China's food safety conditions.

**Key words:** Food safety; Food safety incidents; Achievements; Food hygiene law

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### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, frequent food safety issues bring negative influence to people's life and health, causing extensive concern of the whole society. Before the Reform and

Opening up Policies were launched, China was in severe shortage of food. After the reform and opening up, with the development of grain production and the national food industry support policies, China improved its food security, and began to turn more attention to the development of food variety and quality safety improvement.

With increasingly occurrence of food safety problems, researches on food safety are getting more. Among them, researches based on media reports analyzing of food safety problems are getting more. Most of these researches are concentrated on roles and responsibilities of media when reporting food safety problems, typical food safety incidents research. Media reporting has important influence on food safety development, supervising food safety incidents and promoting people's food safety knowledge. Mass media should be a microscope in reporting food safety problems, discovering problems, analyzing the causes of problems and guiding the public opinions.

Most researches focused on the food safety conditions since 2000, providing valuable reference for food safety research of this period. While researches concerning food safety conditions of earlier time are less. This article tries to take the promulgation of Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation) as point of penetration, and conclude the food safety development history from 1984 to 1995 through analyzing the food safety reports of China Food News during the trial implementation period of the Law.

In order to secure national food safety, China issued Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation), which was effective on July 1, 1983. The implementation of this Law means the beginning of food safety legislation, and provides punishment basis for food safety violations. This Law was expired on October 30, 1995, when formal Food Hygiene

Law of the People's Republic of China was promulgated and implemented.

During the period of effectiveness of Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation), what kind of developments and changes China experienced in food safety? What serious food safety incidents happened during that time and why did they happen? What relationships between the food safety changes and social economic developments? This research is intending to study these problems through analyzing and inducing the contents of China Food News from 1984 to 1995 to get conclusions.

## 1. FOOD INDUSTRY CONDITIONS

Since the reform and opening up policy was adopted, China realized the importance of developing food industry and began to attach more importance to food industry development and increased investment annually. According to the data on China Food News, food industry investment was less than 2% of total industry investment in 1979, while the number was up to 2.96% in 1980, 4.3% in 1981 and 5.4% in 1982. (data resource: China Food News)

In 1984, China government constituted National Food Industry Development Outline, which greatly improved the situation of food industry in the nation's whole industry, from being squeezed out of the way for other industries to enjoy the developing priority. Because at that time, people's demands for food were getting rich and various, the development of food industry must catch up with it and satisfy people's needs.

In developed countries at the corresponding time, most of the food people consumed were industrial food. In Japan, industrial food possessed 82% of food consumption, and the proportion was 85% in America, 72% in Russia, while only 32% in China. Most of the food China consumed were raw grains, raw vegetables and raw fruits.

Above that, the industry of drink and beverage closely related to food was also backward compared with other developed countries. The annual consumption of drinks and beverage in America was 107.5 kg per capita, 108.6 kg per capita in West Germany, 50 kg per capita in Japan, 80.4 kg per capita in British, while only 0.4 kg in China. The development of other food categories, such as children's food, aged person's food, etc. was also badly lagging behind. China had a long way to go in food development at that time.

With more and more importance attached to food industry development, China's food industry was greatly improved, the kinds of food getting boosted, new pattern being increased and production efficiency improved. While at the same time, with the rapid development of the food industry, food safety and sanitary problems emerged more frequently, for many local governments and

enterprises paid more attention to economic effects, less to food safety.

## 2. FOOD HYGIENE LAW OF THE PRC (FOR TRIAL IMPLEMENTATION)

Before the promulgation of Food Hygiene Law of the PRC (For Trial Implementation), the food safety and hygiene status were awful. General food qualification rate was very low. Food poisoning incidents occurred frequently and the incidence rate of intestinal infectious diseases was very high. In 1978, serious hepatitis A broke out in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, caused by eating infectious *tegillarca granosa* and resulting in 1,265 persons infected. In 1988, because of eating infectious *Anadara subcrenata*, there was a pandemic outbreak of hepatitis A in Shanghai, causing more than 20,000 persons infected. Besides this, the general inspected food qualification rate from July to September in 1982 was 58.5%, among which meat product was 53.94%, milky product was 59.67%, cold drink was 59.39%. Nearly half of China's food was unqualified. Food safety conditions were terribly poor.

On July 1, 1983, Food Hygiene Law of the PRC (For Trial Implementation) was promulgated.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the country has promulgated five laws and regulations about food hygiene. They are Food Hygiene Management Regulations for Trial Implementation (1965), Food Hygiene Management Regulations of PRC (1979), Food Hygiene Law of the PRC (For Trial Implementation) (1983), Food hygiene law of the PRC (1995), and Food Safety Law of the People's Republic of China (2009).

As for the *Trial Implementation*, it does not mean that this Law was an experimental one or this law had not full legal effect.

We call it Trial Implementation because this is the first time our nation make food hygiene law and there must be many imperfections existed in this law and should expericing a long process of perfection. But its legal effect was not affected by the Trial Implementation. Before being modified, the Food Hygiene Law of the PRC (For Trial Implementation) should be strictly implemented,

the responsible person of Ministry of Health told China Food News in June 1984.

Food Hygiene Law of the PRC (For Trial Implementation) is the first law about food, which contains the following meanings: food hygiene should be guaranteed by legislation; strict implementation of the law to secure people's health; food production should meet the quality standards; food package should meet the sanitary requirements; improve the quality management and inspection organizations; establish sanitary management system; investigate legal liability for violations of Food Hygiene Law.

### 3. CHINA FOOD NEWS ESTABLISHED

In 1984, hosted by China Food Industry Association, China Food News started its publication. It was the only professional newspaper of China food industry with high authority at that time. The main contents of the newspaper concluded: food industry management, food nutrition, marketing of food products, food quality improvement, food hygiene regulations, food science and technology, etc.

Since China Food News was an authoritative professional newspaper, the reports and analyzing it was of strong credibility and had valuable historical research reference.

### 4. FOOD SAFETY INCIDENTS INCREASING

#### 4.1. Upward Trends of Food Safety Problems

China Food News's reports from 1984-1995 concerning food safety were showing upward trends (Figure 1).

#### Causes Analyzing

- 1) With the development of food industry, food safety problems exactly exposed more;
- 2) Media paid more attention to food safety and people's life and health;
- 3) The food quality standard was getting higher than before.

**Table 1**  
**Serious Food Safety Incidents**

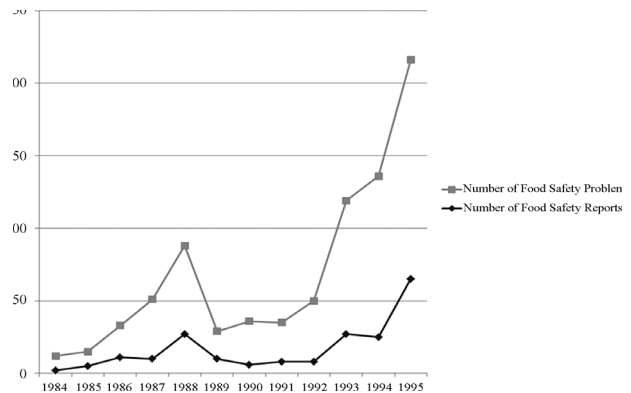
Years	Incidents	Descriptions
1983	Shanghai HAV	20,000 infected
1986	Methylismus in Guangxi	More than 700 poisoned, 7 dead
1987	Food poisoning events in Fujian	The most serious food poisoning incidents since 1949
1988	Food poisoning events in Zhejiang	147 poisoned, 5 dead
1988	Food poisoning events in Shanxi	Caused by dead donkey meat
1988	Shanghai HAV	Caused by polluted scapharca subcrenata, 300,000 infected, 47 dead
1992	Braised chicken poisoning incidents in Ningxia	salmonella typhimurium, more than 110 poisoned
1992	Braised chicken poisoning events in Shanghai	263 poisoned
1992	Beef poisoning events in Shanxi	516 poisoned
1994	Nitrite poisoning events in Xi'an	More than 130 poisoned and in hospital

#### Main Causes of Food Safety Incidents

Through text analysis of China Food News' reports, we get some reasons for these frequent food safety incidents in China at that time.

1) Affected by many years of food shortage, people had a special feeling for food. Even if it had been deteriorated or moldy, people were still reluctant to throw it away. Sometimes in order to save money, people bought low-priced vegetables, fruits, and meat, most of which was in poor quality and often caused many kinds of diseases, such as Diarrhea, Typhoid fever and dysentery.

2) Inspection instruments were outdated and inspection methods were backward. Sometimes the inspection was made only by a pair of hands or eyes.



**Figure 1**  
**Changes of Food Safety Reports in China Food News from 1984 to 1995**

#### 4.2 Poisoning Caused Most Incidents

From the Table 1, we can see that food poisoning was the main cause of food safety incidents during that period. Though the food hygiene status was improved since the reform and opening up policy was adopted, the general situation of food hygiene was very poor. Unsanitary food could be found everywhere. For example, in January 1994, Xi'an occurred a serious food poisoning incident. More than 130 persons were poisoned by nitrite illegally used to alternate table salt to be added to boiled beef and mutton.

3) The supervision ability was weak because of Lack of supervisory staff. For example, in Beijing, there were 40 thousand food enterprises and 70 thousand food stands, while only 180 supervisors; in Zhejiang province, one supervisor should be in charge of 600 enterprises; in Harbin, 84 inspectors should be responsible for 4 million people.

4) Poor management and weak punishment. Though Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation) was promulgated, the detailed rules for the implementation of the Law were not clear and definite. For example, in 1985, 52 enterprises in Guangdong produced a lot of fake milk powder to make high profit. After being caught, these enterprises were only fined 2,000-3,000 yuan. In the Law, the amount of

fine penalty was from 20 to 30,000 yuan. Unclear level of punishment caused inaccurate application of law.

5) A certain amount of enterprises paid more attention to economic profits, neglecting food safety quality.

### 4.3 Drinks, Alcohol, and Fresh Milk Possess Large Share

From Figure 2, we can see that drinks, alcohol, dairy food and fresh milk were categories of frequent food safety problems.

From the reports of China Food News, before and after 1990, adulterated alcohol flooded China's alcohol market. The whole nation had seized more than tens of million bottles of adulterated alcohol and when the alcohol brand was famous, the situation of alcohol adulteration was more serious, such as Maotai and Wuliangye. In 1991, Shanghai seized 32,044 bottles of adulterated Maotai and 30,160 bottles of adulterated Wuliangye, total illegal business amount to ¥8,000,000. In the second half of the year 1991, Zhejiang Province hunt down and seized

more than 6,000 boxes of Maotai and Wuliangye, illegal operation amount to more than ¥10,000,000. The flooding of alcohol adulteration was worrisome.

#### 4.3.1 Take Drinks and Alcohol as Example

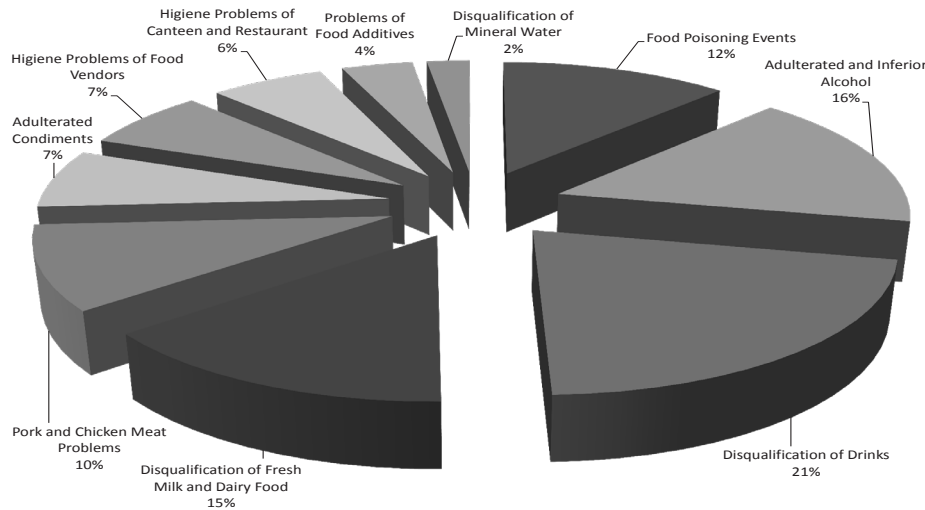
In 1991, 3,611 batches of samples were inspected, while only 1,282 were qualified, the qualification rate was 35.5%.

In 1992, the data of the State Bureau of Technology Supervision indicated that 2/3 of carbonated beverage (sodas) enterprises could not meet the hygiene standard, 80% of township enterprises.

But it was gratifying that the production quality of large scale enterprises in large city was good and stable, such as Beijing Beibingyang Food Company, Shanghai Soda Plant, etc. Their qualification rate was 96%.

#### 4.3.2 Why Was the Drinks' Quality so Bad?

- 1) Incorrect business sense;
- 2) Low level of management;
- 3) Backward production technology;
- 4) Lax control of licensing.



**Figure 2**  
**Category Proportion of Food Safety Problems**

### 4.4. Achievements Since the Trial Implementation of the Law

In 1995, 12 years after the implementation of the Law, we had made great progress on food safety. The qualification rate of hygiene inspection is greatly improved from 61.5% to 82.5%; the number of food poisoning persons halved and the death rate declined obviously.

The main achievements are as follows:

1) Improved the development of food hygiene standardization system.

By the end of the year 1995, China had 854 National Standards being implemented in the food industry. Before the implementation of the Law, most of the standards were aimed to unhygienic food or food poisoning. Before reform and opening up, we only have 54 food

hygiene standards and 12 hygienic management methods concerning 14 categories. Coordinating with the trial implementation of Food Hygiene Law, Ministry of Health organized National Health Standard and Technology Committee, studying and promulgating national standards and inspection methods covering limit standards of poisonous and harmful materials, using standards of food additives and package materials standards, etc..

2) Qualification rate of food was greatly improved. After ten years of trial implementation of Food Hygiene Law, many provinces and cities offered their inspection data about qualification rate of food. Shandong: from 61.66% in 1983 to 83.57% in 1992; Suzhou: from 37.4% to 83.3%; Changsha: from 69.4% to 84.8%. Qualification rate of Alcohol, pastry, milky powder was



improved respectively to 96%, 85.4%, 88.9%. Ratio of food poisoning declined 99.1% and 58.4% of Intestinal infectious disease declination.

3) Supervision and administration system was getting better and more effective. Such as staff, organizational settings, laboratory establishing, rules and regulations making.

4) Legislation has improved step by step. More than 80 food hygiene laws and rules, 300 food hygiene standards were made and promulgated, having stimulated the improvement of food quality. On September 1, 1993, Product Quality Law of PRC was published to strengthen food quality management of food enterprises.

5) Health consciousness was improved. Many local governments attached great importance to food hygiene issues, connecting food hygiene work with leaders' achievements. While sometimes, some leaders value economic development and devalue food hygiene issues, causing bad effects to healthy development of food industry and catering trade.

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## CONCLUSION

The promulgation of Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation) reflected the further improvement of China's food sanitary and safety legislation. Through the analysing of China Food News' reports concerning food safety and food sanitary, we can conclude that in this historical period, China had made great progress in food safety and sanitary though the general food safety development was still backward. Since the implementation of Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation), the food sanitary status was improved through rectifying and regulating food stands, catering enterprises and food production enterprises. Through standardizing the industry standard and strengthening production management, the process of food standardization was speeded up and the food qualification rate was increased. enhancement of legislation and supervision, improvement of health consciousness and awareness, stimulating sound

development of food industry and protecting people's life and health. Cooperating with the enforcement of Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation), the legislation and supervision related to food sanitary and safety was gradually improved. With the effective communication of mass media and improvement of people's living standard, people's consciousness and awareness about food safety and life health were improved further.

There are still many problems and deficiencies in food safety. Rules for Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation) are not clear or definite, and the food safety level is still low. Lacking of effective supervision, administration and regulation enforcement, the market was flooded with many counterfeits and shoddy food products, bringing serious influence to people's life and health.

Above that, with the development of social economy and improvement of people's life, some parts of the Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation) could not meet the needs of the social reality. Necessary amendment and supplementary were needed to revise the Law. With these stimulations, Food Hygiene Law of the People's Republic of China came into force on October 30, 1995.

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