



FOOD SAFETY

in urban settings

ISSUES: Food safety is a public health priority; millions of people fall ill every year and many die as a result of eating unsafe food. Serious outbreaks of food-borne disease have been documented on every continent in the past decade, and in many countries rates of illnesses are increasing significantly. Diarrhoeal diseases alone kill an estimated 1.8 million children annually, and most of these illnesses are attributed to contaminated food or water. Key global food safety concerns include the spread of microbiological hazards and chemical food contaminants, assessments of new food technologies, such as genetically modified food, and the need for stronger food safety systems in most countries to ensure a safe global food chain. Rapid urbanization worldwide is adding to risks, as urban dwellers eat more food prepared outside the home that may not be handled or prepared safely.

WHO is working to minimize health risks from farm to table, to prevent outbreaks and to promote the five keys to food safety:

1. keeping clean hands, utensils and premises used for food preparation
2. separating raw and cooked foods by using separate utensils and storage facilities
3. cooking foods thoroughly – especially foods of animal origin
4. keeping perishable foods at safe temperatures – either below 5 °C or above 60 °C
5. using safe water and raw materials for food preparation.

SOLUTIONS: The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has developed a practical module for food safety intended for use by the public and communities in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The module is user-friendly and designed for areas where community-based initiatives are being implemented. The objective of the module is to empower communities to be able to ensure the safety of their food.

ACTIONS DURING 2010: The healthy city programme is designed to create awareness among the urban population of their health and environment. It is important for people to feel that the food they are purchasing or consuming is safe. To maintain trust, the urban community should be fully involved in ensuring the safety and quality of the food in their markets, within the principles of the community-based approach. The target population should be youth and mothers.

THE WAY FORWARD: The World Health Day 2010 campaign provides an opportunity to raise awareness on the importance of food safety in urban settings. City mayors should lead the advocacy activities and food safety campaigns, as well as efforts to strengthen the existing food monitoring system or establish a firm and sustainable food monitoring system and ensure provision of safe and quality food. Under the leadership of the mayor, local communities must take part in understanding healthy markets and the needs of vendors. WHO will continue to support countries in addressing the needs of markets and empowering communities to improve their life across all sectors.



World Health Day 2010
Urbanization and Health



World Health
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