



Food safety, consumer trust and emerging trends

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ABSTRACT

The complexity of today's global food industry demands robust food safety systems that go beyond technical solutions. Sustainable production, advanced technologies, and circular economy principles are essential to meet the needs of a growing population. Despite regulatory controls, incidents of contamination persist, impacting consumer trust as a key foundation of food safety. Modern food safety systems must address both accidental and intentional risks, including food fraud, through transparent communication and proactive management. Establishing a strong food safety culture, with leadership and risk awareness, is crucial for transitioning from reactive to proactive systems. Ultimately, integrated approaches and stakeholder engagement are vital for building resilient, trustworthy, and sustainable food systems.

1. Introduction

The growing food industry and its complexity have intensified its significance due to the need for a robust and trusted global food system and food safety mechanisms. These mechanisms have to extend beyond the technical solutions in the area of food production, processing, distribution, and consumption (Vågsholm *et al.*, 2020). As the world population grows, feeding the global population requires a sustainable approach, with reducing food loss, new and sophisticated technologies, introducing circular economy, with improved effectiveness and efficiency, and taking care of the environment (Singh, 2025; Kilibarda *et al.*, 2023). Food production depends on numerous factors, including weather conditions, geopolitical situations, as well as supply and demand

on the market (FAO, 2025). Food security requires proactive decision-making with improved food safety and innovation in production and distribution to achieve a secure system (Chandimali *et al.*, 2025; Karabasil *et al.*, 2023).

This article explores recent advances in food safety and food safety culture assessment, and the evolution of consumer trust.

2. Food systems and safety

Food used to be produced and sold locally. The journey from the producer to the consumer was short, and raw materials for production were used from the local area. Today, the situation is different. Food systems are complex, raw materials are procured from different geographical latitudes and distances, and

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the product is often a complex mixture of them with appropriate technological processing (Aybar Espinoza et al., 2026). Nowadays, it is quite rare to sell food from the doorstep, but distributors and wholesale and retail networks are involved in the process. This situation further complicates the food production chain, and therefore, a proactive approach to risk control must be taken. The risks are numerous, and there is practically no point in the production chain where possible contamination cannot occur (Zahir et al., 2025; Yeak et al., 2025). Today, more and more food is placed and sold on the international market, and therefore, the number of links that make up the chain of production, distribution, and consumption is becoming longer and more complex (Grabs & Carodenuto, 2021). In general, consumers have a greater preference for local or domestic products compared to products from the global market. This consumer attitude is more of a habit than an element consistent with assessed risk or a record of proven risk (Polleau & Biermann, 2021). There are several reasons that affect market stability and consumer confidence, including foodborne disease agents, increasingly recorded chemical food contaminants, transboundary diseases, intentional food contamination, and food fraud. Although regulatory and process control requirements are constantly being improved, there are still incidents related to risks in the food and food production chain, such as Salmonella, residues of antimicrobial drugs, pesticides, metal fragments, etc (Aybar Espinoza et al., 2026; Karabasil et al., 2025; Karabasil et al., 2021).

Nowadays, the demands of the consumers are getting more prominent and are realized through different levels. Entities in the food business want to cope with it and keep the trust of consumers, as a foundation of food safety. The consumer will forgive an error and incidents that occurs during the process of production, storage, and distribution, but only in case they received clear and transparent information regarding the product and the further procedure (Gannon et al., 2022). In order to fulfil the requirements of the legislator and the requirements of the market and ensure a sufficient amount of safe and nutritional food for the population's diet, producers must follow and introduce in the system new and sophisticated technologies that require additional resources in the competitive market (Chandimali et al., 2025; Harnessing, 2025).

3. Food control

If there is no safe food, we cannot have secure food. Food safety is based on several levels of control: application of legal requirements, application of the rules of good hygiene practice and good production practice, principles of HACCP, verification, and official control (Radu et al., 2023). We are aware that the food sector is a sector that operates with risks. The risks are numerous, and according to the risk assessment and analysis by the regulatory body and food business operators, they must be eliminated or kept under control with application of adequate measures. However, we witness that incidents occur, and control fails to prevent microbiological, chemical, or physical contamination (Zahir et al., 2025; Yeak et al., 2025). These situations undermine consumer confidence, which is the foundation of food safety. In the 21st century, in addition to food safety, which primarily deals with the prevention of accidental contamination in the food chain, food systems must take care of the prevention of intentional contamination and food defence, as well as food fraud (Neuberger et al., 2025; Marin et al., 2025; Davidson et al., 2017). In order to keep all these challenges under control, regulatory authorities and food systems must develop and implement management systems based on constant monitoring and control of critical parameters along the entire chain of production, distribution, and consumption (Manning, 2020). Control systems have to use modern technology, which implies the use of information technologies, including artificial intelligence (Harnessing, 2025).

In order to enable sustainable production, distribution, consumption and improve awareness of food safety principles, nowadays we are talking about a food safety culture that contains collective values and rules in one system (Tongyu Wu & Wallace, 2025). Key elements of a food safety culture are leadership, communication, risk, and environmental awareness. Leadership and adequate communication in a system that operates with risk, such as the food industry, are key proactive components that drive the system and create such an internal environment where employees, through compliance with established procedures, ensure the integrity of the process from a reactive to a proactive system (Manning, 2020).

4. Consumer trust

The history of consumer trust in food production systems includes global connectivity and a complex network that has an impact on consumer expectations and includes a demand for transparent and traceable information that has an impact on consumer attitudes and product placement (Anastasiadis *et al.*, 2022). The integrity of the chain of food production, distribution and consumption is often affected by incidents as a result of failure, change of food properties, evident finding of biological, chemical, or physical risk. Although not all recorded incidents represent a direct health hazard, each recorded incident affects consumer confidence and the integrity of the food chain (Vainio *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the responsibility of the food chain lies in the corresponding transparency and traceability. The improvement of this aspect includes numerous parameters such as sustainability of the agricultural production chain, origin of raw materials and products, composition and properties of products, processing and used technology, supply chain, regulatory requirements, awareness, and responsibility of consumers. The fact is that the expected growth trend of the world's population by 2050 is expect-

ed to reach 10 billion people, which creates enormous pressure on food systems to place a sufficient amount of safe food on the market (FAO, 2025; Roy, 2024). In order to achieve this, food production must be significantly increased, which can represent a significant obstacle for the food system, if it does not transition in the coming years to sustainable production systems with the best possible utilization of raw materials with minimal waste while preserving the environment. Modern consumers' expectations are very closely related with the sustainable and responsible production with care for our planet and keeping resources for next generations (Karabasil *et al.*, 2023; Jiang *et al.*, 2021).

5. Conclusion

Food safety is multidimensional and complex, and influences both organisational effectiveness and the confidence of consumers. Technological innovations offer powerful tools for risk mitigations, but their success depends on stakeholder engagement and as well as other sectors. Only an integrated, holistic approach will enable food systems to achieve a compact and resilient state with an important element of consumer trust.

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