

Key to healthy nutrition: Changing from curative to prevention

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SUMMARY

One of the country's main health challenges is the double-burden of malnutrition. On one hand is the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) driven by lifestyle-related risk factors such as unhealthy diet and physical inactivity on the other hand is the persistent under-nutrition problems of stunting and wasting. The health care system is based on a reactive approach to illness wherein we wait until people are sick before we treat them and focus on symptoms and disease treatment. At the same time, people will wait until they are very well before they actively seek care from doctors. This approach causes unnecessary strain on the health care system because of the high cost for management and treatment. It is thus imperative that we change from curative to prevention, requiring a shift in mindset from 'sick-care' to 'well-care'. The second pillar of the proposed health system reform in the Health White Paper (HWP) of the Ministry of Health focuses on advancing health promotion and disease prevention. To realise the shift to promotive and preventive health care, the Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM) advocates that promoting healthy nutrition across all stages of the life cycle is one of the key approaches. Recognising that healthy nutrition is the cornerstone to good health, NSM believes in improving lives through nutrition. The NSM urges that the strategies and programmes outlined in the National Plan of Action for Nutrition Malaysia must be activated and systematically implemented. Sufficient resources must be provided to enable these to be implemented. This includes sufficient manpower in the form of an adequate number of capable, well-trained nutritionists, as well as dedicated funding to implement these activities. The Allied Health Professions Act 774 has recognised that nutritionists are the key professionals tasked with the prevention and control of nutrition-related diseases. Nutritionists must advocate nutrition to professionals in the agriculture, education, social welfare and other relevant disciplines. We must form strategic partnerships with all stakeholders: government, academia, professional bodies and the private sector to build a system that supports the population to stay healthy.

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Food industries smart partnership: Strengthening food safety and trade

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SUMMARY

Food safety is a pressing global concern, drawing continuous public attention and media coverage. In Malaysia, the food industry's annual economic value reaches RM 313.8 billion, with consumers spending RM 175.2 billion annually on food. Additionally, food exports contribute RM 82.1 billion, and imports amount to RM 56.7 billion. To meet the demand for safe food, the Ministry of Health assumes the role of guardian, tasked with providing guarantees to the people. The Competent Authority in Malaysia, responsible for food safety and quality, enforces regulations under the Food Act 1983. These regulations, including the Food Regulations 1985, Food Hygiene Regulations 2009, and Food Irradiation Regulations 2011, establish standards for food additives, labelling, hygiene, and irradiation. Maintaining food safety becomes challenging due to the complexity of the food supply chain. Lengthy and intricate supply chains increase the risk of contamination, counterfeit products, and quality issues. Factors like raw material availability, cross-border procurement, and centralized production further compound the difficulties. Moreover, emerging hazards, changing consumer trends, and media influence also impact food safety. Ensuring food safety presents various issues and challenges, such as intensified agricultural practices, large-scale production, new ingredients, processing technologies, and differing regulations across nations. Addressing these challenges involves adopting risk assessment-based approaches and directing resources to high-risk areas. Collaborative efforts with producers and exporting countries' authorities are essential to foster cooperation. To address food safety risks beyond the government and health sectors' control, a regional framework in the Western Pacific emphasizes shared responsibility among food businesses, consumers, and multiple government sectors. Numerous organizations and programs engage in food safety work, promoting greater scrutiny and science-based approaches in the industry. The Smart Partnership Programme, such as the Sustainable Supplier Development Programme, Petronas Supplier Programme and Government and Non-Government Agency facilitates collaboration between the public and private sectors to enhance food safety throughout the supply chain. By implementing these collaborations benefits students, premises, stakeholders, retailers, and The National Food Safety and Nutrition Council. International cooperation plays a vital role in strengthening food safety efforts. Collaborations with organizations like the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils, ASEAN Risk Assessment Centre for Food Safety, and the International Food Safety Authorities Network provide valuable expertise, cost-sharing opportunities, and complementary efforts. In conclusion, ensuring food safety requires multifaceted partnerships and collaborations at both national and international levels. In the rapidly globalizing food industry, close cooperation among food safety regulatory authorities is crucial to effectively reduce risks and respond promptly to incidents and emergencies. Through these partnerships, supply chain efficiency can be enhanced, and safe food can be ensured for consumers worldwide.