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Online-to-offline food delivery system and its innovation in food chain development and food safety supervision in China

Xueyin Zhao, Mayila Maimaiti, Jiayu Li, Ninglin Wang and Shankuan Zhu
Zhejiang University, China

China has experienced remarkable economic progress and rapid urbanization since the 1980's when it entered the period of economic reform. This trend brought dramatic impacts to food industry and diet-related behaviors. The prevalence of diet-related diseases has been raised gradually in China. Recently, as the e-commerce market growing heavily, another emerging challenge that should not be overlooked is the change in food shopping habits arisen from a fast-growing online-to-offline (O2O) food delivery market in China. Differed from the conventional telephone ordering and food ordering system, in which each restaurant takes responsibility for its own food orders and delivery, the O2O food delivery system acts as a third party with its own platform and delivery crew to coordinate orders and delivery for hundreds of registered restaurants. It is also more convenient and user-friendly than the traditional system as orders can be easily selected and placed through a mobile app and get delivered in a short period of time. This game-changing trend brings opportunities to improve food accessibility and availability but meanwhile poses inevitable challenges to the whole public health system and social environment in China. However, studies on the impact of the development of O2O food delivery industry on food environment are lacking. This paper offers a unique perspective of the development of O2O food delivery industry and the food chain supervision brought by the O2O system in building platform and delivery system to connect and integrate raw food material producer, food service provider, and food consumer. Opportunities and challenges it brings on food environment and food safety are discussed, as well as the health outcomes caused by related behavior change, and its broader influence on social environment.

xueyin129@126.com