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### *Debnath Chaudhuri*

*All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, India*

#### **Food safety: An issue of public health concern**

For sustenance of life and promotion of good health, safe and nutritious food in adequate amount is required. However, when contaminated, food can act as a vector for bacteria, viruses, parasites and prions causing food poisoning. Foods are also often contaminated with toxic chemicals, mixed accidentally or intentionally which may be potentially harmful. Unsafe food is responsible for creating a vicious cycle of disease and malnutrition, affecting all and particularly infants, young children and elderly. More than 200 diseases have been reported to be caused due to consumption of foods containing pathogenic microorganisms and toxic chemicals. Food and water borne diarrheal diseases are linked to the death of an estimated 2 million people annually worldwide. In US 1 out of 6 gets sick from food borne diseases and 300 die as a result. It is estimated that reduction of food borne diseases by 10% would save 5 million people from getting sick. In order to protect consumers against intake of unsafe foods, ISO 22000 has been developed by the International Organization for Standardization. In 2003, WHO and FAO published Codex Alimentarius that serves as a guideline to food safety. In India, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is entrusted for the implementation of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. Importance of educating food handlers regarding food safety was long been known to WHO. The organization in 1990 developed the "Ten Golden Rules for Safe Food Preparation" that was widely distributed. However, realizing that for general application a simpler recommendation will be practicable and effective WHO introduced the "Five Keys to Safer Food Poster" in 2001, which incorporated all the messages of the previous recommendation in simpler headings. In 2006 Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Food borne Diseases of WHO developed "Five Keys to Safer Manual" that included the "background material" related to food safety and "five keys to food safety". The core messages of food safety are keep clean, separate raw and cooked food, cook thoroughly, keep food at safe temperature and use safe water and raw materials. A strategic plan for taking action on priority issues of food safety and food borne zoonoses was initiated by WHO in 2010 for the period 2013-2022. In order to decline the incidences of food borne illness CDC has framed specific strategies with an objective to reach the target by 2020. Food safety is thus a prerequisite for food and nutritional security and an area of public health concern to protect consumers from the risk of food poisoning and food borne diseases. No wonder that realizing the importance of providing safe food to the consumers, WHO has declared "Food Safety" as the theme for "World Health Day 2015" with the slogan "From Farm to Plate, Make Food Safe" and initiated the campaign that aims to spur government to improve food safety through public awareness campaigns and highlight their ongoing actions in this area and encourage consumers to ensure that the food on their plate is safe.

#### **Biography**

Debnath Chaudhuri is a Professor and Head of Department of Biochemistry & Nutrition at All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health. He has completed his MSc and PhD in Biochemistry from Calcutta University. He has more than 30 years of teaching and research experience in biochemistry, nutrition and food sciences and he has more than 25 publications in international and national journals and books. He is the Editor of two and Reviewer of several international and national journals of nutrition and public health besides being Ex-Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Indian Dietetic Association*. He was a Resource Person for World Bank funded project on "Capacity building in food safety and quality control of drugs". He is the Fellow of Indian Public Health Association and International College of Nutrition.

[dchaudhuri\\_bn@rediffmail.com](mailto:dchaudhuri_bn@rediffmail.com)