

# Increasing food quality risks are affecting global food supply chain

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A new study from the *Journal of Supply Chain Management* illustrates the real potential for contamination of globally sourced foods and proposes a conceptual framework of supply chain quality management.

Led by Aleda V. Roth of Clemson University with co-authors Andy Tsay of Santa Clara University, Madeleine Pullman of Portland State University, and John Gray of Ohio State University, the study utilized information from trends of U.S. food imports from China, subsequent recall events, and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) data to highlight the inherent difficulties and risks posed by global food supply chains.

Various quality problems have been associated with foods and ingredients imported from China. There exists limited capacity of current regulatory bodies to police product flows, including lack of enforcement by the FDA. Problems often arise when pursuit of profit is not held in check by regulatory forces, resulting in noncompliance with laws and standards, and even corruption. These problems have led to a contamination of Chinese-made products.

How should these challenges be handled" Roth says that "adding on inspections and stricter regulations alone may be neither sustainable nor effective in the long run." US regulations requiring tracing of ingredients one step forward and one step backward in the supply chain is inadequate in 12,000 mile, complex supply chains. In China, for example, inputs to food ingredients are combined from millions of small

farms. And there are often many intermediaries involved in the various stages of getting food from the farm to table. Moreover, longer distances affect food freshness and quality and often necessitate the addition of chemical preservatives and dyes.

The authors have posed a different path—one that offers a deeper understanding of the root causes and robust solutions. Their path follows from a conceptual framework called the “6Ts” of supply chain quality management. Each of the “6Ts”—traceability, transparency, testability, time, trust, and training—are critical to the preservation of the public welfare through a safe food supply. The “6Ts” represent the key necessary inputs and outputs to ensure that high-quality food is delivered to consumers.

“A major contribution of this paper is to bring to the forefront the critical challenges posed by the global sourcing of food and to provide an agenda for further discussion and research regarding global food supply chains,” the authors conclude.

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