

Transformation of China's Food Supervision System from the Non-traditional Security Perspective

Chantong Wang

School of Public Affairs, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

wangchantong@zju.edu.cn

Keywords: food security, non-traditional security, food supervision, comparative perspective

Abstract: In this paper, a non-traditional perspective is used to analyze the transformation of China's food supervision system. Theory of endogenous non-traditional security threats is analyzed and some developed countries are compared so that common characteristics and successful experiences can be summarized for reference. Food security is a public issue and needs a new governance mode instead of traditional government control. Governments must attach enough importance on participation of the public and third sectors, the transformation of China's food supervision system which should contain regime transformation, subject transformation and technology transformation, need a cooperation and coordination of all social forces.

1. Food security and food supervision

1.1 Definition of food security and food supervision

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) first put forward the concept of "food safety" in 1974^[1]. In 1984, WHO (World Health Organization) used food safety and food hygiene as synonyms in *The role of food safety in health and development*. In 1996, "food safety" was firstly distinguished from "food hygiene" in *Guidelines for strengthening national food safety programs*, and based on this file, "food safety" is "A guarantee that the consumer will not be harmed when the food is made or consumed for its intended use", while "food hygiene" is "To ensure the adequacy of food safety, all the conditions and measures that must be taken at all stages of the food chain".^[2]

There are many definitions about food security, one of the most commonly used is "Food production, breeding, processing, packaging, storing, transportation, sales, consumption and other activities in line with national mandatory standards and requirements, and there should be no potential harmful or threatening substances which is toxic to human health and thus causing the death of consumers or endangering consumers and their future generations" defined by General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China.

The narrow definition of food supervision means the government plays as the supervision subject to participate in the supervision and management of food safety in order to ensure the food products will not be dangerous or harmful to consumers.

1.2 Current situation of food security

Although many countries attach importance to food security and take measures to ensure food products qualities, the situation of food security is still not optimistic, especially when using new technology and material.

The mad cow disease incident in 1996 in Britain was the first food safety incident in human history that endangered human health worldwide. On March 20, 1996, Britain's Health Minister Dorell publicly acknowledged for the first time in Parliament of the United Kingdom, that 10 patients were so far found symptoms similar to mad cow disease. This remark aroused strong reaction in the world, 10 member states of the European Union issued a statement banning the import of beef, live cattle and milk products, as well as food, feedstuffs, related pharmaceuticals

and beauty products in the United Kingdom. Just because of the ban on exports, the United Kingdom lost 5.2 billion US dollars in annual sales.^[3]

Sanlu incident or poison milk powder incident is a very famous food security incident in China. In 2008, many babies who drank milk powder produced by Sanlu company were found kidney stones, then Sanlu was exposed adding melamine into milk powder. The melamine is an industrial substance which is harmful to people especially children. This incident caused huge panic in China and Sanlu company went bankrupt finally.

1.3 Non-traditional security

Mankind's emphasis on non-traditional security threats stems from the concern over non-military issues. From the middle of the twentieth century, the deterioration of the ecological environment, unbalanced economic development, serious poverty and lack of resources have all entered the field of safety research. After the 21st century, the issues of terrorism, climate, energy crisis, financial crisis, food crisis and information security have become important topics in security research. Especially when the non-state actors' participation and asymmetrical challenges become the main source of security threats, human security threats have broken through the traditional sovereignty boundaries and the way of security maintenance surpassed the traditional methods of military force, countries all over the world have given more and more attention and research on non-traditional security issues such as economic security, environmental security, cultural security, etc.

In this process, the United Nations has played a major guiding role. In June 1972, the United Nations held a conference on human environment in Stockholm, Sweden, presenting the report *Only One Earth - Concern and Maintenance of a Little Planet*, stating that "the current environmental trend can't last long because human beings are moving toward a path of self-destruction". In 1994, *the United Nations Human Development Report* comprehensively expounded the concept of "human security" and covered seven major security issues: economic security, food security, health and safety, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. In the same year, UN Secretary-General Ghali also stressed in *An Agenda for Peace* the threat to mankind caused by the problem of unlimited population growth, debt, drugs, the gap between rich and poor, poverty, disease, famine and refugees, and reminded people that these threats do no less harm than traditional war threats. In the early 21st century, the United Nations focused on combating terrorism and paid close attention to climate issues, energy issues and the global financial crisis.

Non-traditional security is not a mutual security threat among countries, it is not a country thinking how to deal with another one's security threats, but the national community thinking how to work together to deal with common issues of security threats, and how we work together to maintain and improve the global commons.^[4]

1.4 Food security as an endogenous non-traditional security threat

The non-traditional security issues can be classified according to different standards. From the origin of threats and the interweaving characteristics of non-traditional security and traditional security threats, non-traditional security can be divided into four categories: endogenous non-traditional security threats, exogenous non-traditional security threats, dual-genous non-traditional security threats, and heterogeneous non-traditional security threats.^[5]

Endogenous non-traditional security threats means that the threat originates in one country and may spread beyond borders to affect other countries or areas associated with the security zones in other countries after its proliferation, thus further affecting the country itself. Its homeland should take necessary internal policies with diplomatic influence to take such measures as early warning, prevention and control, response and disposal so as to eliminate its harmfulness or negative impact. Food security belongs to endogenous non-traditional security threats.

2. China’s food supervision system

2.1 China’s food supervision system

The Food safety law of the People’s Republic of China (2009) has replaced the word “food hygiene” with “food safety”, indicating China's perception of food safety has changed. After the 12th National People's Congress in 2013, China Food and Drug Administration (CFDA) was established which integrated food supervision duties from State Council Food Safety Committee Office, China Food and Drug Administration, General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of China, and State Administration for Industry and Commerce. According to *The Food Safety Law of the People’s Republic of China* (2015), China’s food supervision system is as below:

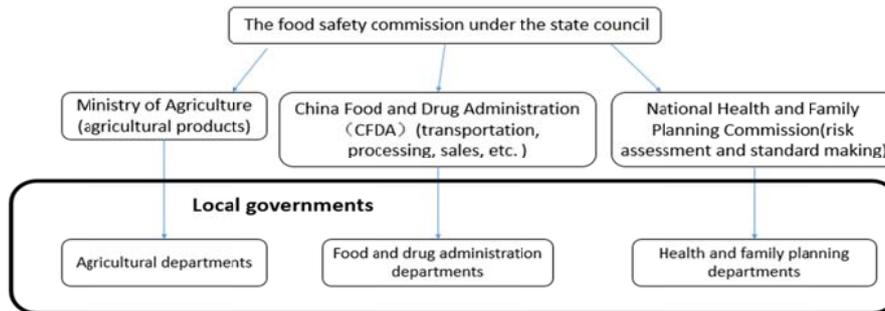


Figure 1. China’s food supervision system

2.2 Problems

Food safety problems are still one of the most worrying issues for the government and the public. In 2014, the National Food and Drug Administration system investigated and dealt with 84,500 cases that did not meet the food safety standards, and investigated 1,461,600 kilograms of unqualified food products; A total of 13,893,000 food proprietors were inspected throughout the country and 379,800 various markets including wholesale markets and bazaars, the National Food and Drug Administration system smashed 949 fake dens, investigated and dealt with 1,531 cases of illegal addition or abuse of food additives, investigated and handled 138,000 kilograms of non-food substances and food additives, revoked 658 licenses and created 133,900 food safety demonstration stores.^[8]

2.3 Analysis of the causes of problems in food supervision

Subsection supervision system causes cross-responsibility and unclear responsibility. Although CFDA has integrated many departments’ duties on food supervision, there are still cross-responsibility and unclear responsibility in local departments, such as agricultural departments, industry and commerce departments, and health departments. The laws are not detailed enough to clarify different departments’ responsibilities. In addition, one of the shortcomings of subsection supervision is the possibility of blind area where no departments supervise.

Relative laws and standards are not comprehensive and detailed enough. In one hand, the formulation and implementation of food safety laws and standards lag behind the appearance of new technologies and new products, for example, we still lack relative standards about new high-tech products like antibiotics and GMF (genetically modified food). In the other hand, some standards of food safety in China is far from the standard of food safety in the world.

Lack of public participation. Many consumers can’t get necessary information related to the food products because the label regime is inadequate. The public and third sectors are also important supervision subjects and a good public opinion supervision system will contribute a lot to supervise producers. The third sectors can share information and help government with technology and resources.

Risk assessment and control system is short of technical support. Traceability system supported

with information technology and risk control tool like HACCP will reduce the possibility of food security threats signally, however, China's food traceability system is still in its infancy except some pilot projects.

3. Foreign Food Supervision Experience

3.1 America's food supervision system

America has quite comprehensive and detailed laws about food security (35 laws related to food, and 7 of them related directly to food safety). There are 12 departments at the federal level which have supervision duty, and every department supervises overall process from farm to table of several food categories instead of subsection supervision like China. Presidential Food Safety Management Committee which is directly responsible to the president plays a role in coordinating different departments and providing suggestions. America use HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) as a tool to do risk control and there are also some useful regulations which are formed from more than one department, for example, food recall system is mainly carried out by FDA and FSIS in USDA.

3.2 European Union's food supervision system

EU's food supervision is different. Every member country has its own food supervision system, and at the European level, there are Council of European Union, European Commission and European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) which form the supervision system. Council of European Union is responsible for making basic policy and laws. And FVO (Food and Veterinary Office) which belongs to DG SANCO (Directorate General Health and Consumers) in European Commission, is the main department to supervise the enforcement of food safety laws, which means it is the supervision subject. EFSA has the duty of risk assessment and providing suggestions, it also public assessment results to public and get feedbacks.

3.3 Japan's food supervision system

Japan's food supervision system is a little similar to China. There are different departments responsible for subsections of food production. Ministry of Health supervises procession and circulation of food, while Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries supervises procession and circulation of agricultural products. Food Safety Commission is established for risk assessment and provides consulting to cabinet, and coordinates Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries as well.

3.4 Comparison with developed countries

There are some common characteristics about these three developed countries which are summarized as below:

Table 1. Comparison among developed countries

Common characteristics	All have food safety committee or similar departments which coordinates whole food supervision
	All have comprehensive and detailed laws
	Food recall system and huge compensation
	The third sector and the public participation
	All widely use HACCP and risk assessment system
	Farm-to-table supervision and Traceability system
Main difference	Centralized mode(unified administration by on department like EU) and dispersed mode(common supervision by several departments with different food category(America) or subsection(Japan))

China also have the food safety commission under the state council, but it can't coordinate different departments very well as its administrative rank is not high enough, especially in local

governments. Departments' duty is not clarified by law so shirking responsibility and blind areas exist. In addition, the procedure, grade and supervision of the recall system are not as clear as America and EU. Traceability system needs to be improved with information technology, and use HACCP more widely to control risk well. Last but not least, because of the complexity of food supervision, every subjects like croppers, processors, sellers and consumers of the food production supply chain should make efforts to help government and improve the system. By enhancing the transparency and openness of food supervision, attaching more importance on public opinion supervision and media to mobilize the enthusiasm of the community, it will make supervision more efficient and satisfying.

4. Transformation of food supervision system from the non-traditional perspective

4.1 Food supervision in the non-traditional perspective

As a typical non-traditional threat, Food security supervision also needs to be changed from "regulation" to "governance"^[6]. It needs to transcend the perspective of "government-centrism" and reflect a generalized understanding of security, which means we should consider and deal with the food security problems from the multi-level and multi-angle of individual, nation, region and world. The transnational characteristics of food security require that when dealing with food safety issues, we should abandon the old security cooperation model and adopt a solution that transcends borders, races and ideologies so that food security governance can be more efficient and satisfying.

To solve the problem well, we must change our idea and try to handle it with the non-traditional security perspective. As security should become a superior co-existence between actors which need co-development and co-creation. The basic implications of shared security include the following facets—human life as the very foundation of human values, common harmony of mankind as the principle of the value, mutual trust and mutual collaboration as the path of realizing the human value, and win-win sharing as the value objective^[7].

4.2 Transformation path and policy suggestions

4.2.1 Regime transformation

It is necessary to learn from developed countries and clarify different departments' duties such as supervision scope and department cooperation and communication system by enhancing legislation. Meanwhile, relative laws and standard should be unified and updated timely to meet international standards and improve efficiency.

Cooperate with foreign countries and learn from developed countries. Publish necessary information in time if there is food security threat which has potential influence on foreign countries. Work with other countries to deal with food security problems, establish recall system and risk control system together.

4.2.2 Subject transformation

The current food supervision system in China is a typical government-led single-center governance model. The multi-center governance system with effective market mechanism and multiple actors participating in the social mechanism has not yet formed. Therefore, China's food safety supervision needs to be changed from "single supervision subject" to "multiple supervision subjects" to integrate various resources, and achieve trans-regional, trans-sectoral and trans-border joint supervision so as to create a comprehensive food safety regulation system.

An ideal supervision should contain government, market, society and civil [8]. Take the third sector and the public into supervision system, publish information timely and get feedback. The third sectors, especially the guilds can supervise particular food products as they know the procession and information very well. Pay attention to news media's important effect and share information between government, society and civil, this will contribute to building the reputation mechanism.

4.2.3 Technology transformation

Establish traceability system, risk assessment and control system to supervise whole supply chain from farm to table [9]. Use information technology to improve traceability system, for example, cow ears tag and electronic database which are widely used in EU, and QR code in Japan. Popularize HACCP and other risk control methods to lower the risks and make supervision more scientific and efficient.

References

- [1] Suo Fang. (2011) *On Improvement of Food Regulation System in China - From the Perspective of Comparative Law*. Anhui: Anhui University.
- [2] Ding Xiaowen & Liu Chunhong. (2011) *Food Safety*. Beijing, China Agricultural University Press.
- [3] Li Yi. (2009) *Food Safety in the Background of Globalization - Institutional Construction and International Cooperation*. Shanghai, Fudan University.
- [4] Qin Yaqing. (2013) *Global Management Failure and Reconstruction of the Concept of Order*. *World Economy and Politics*, 4, 6-7.
- [5] Yu Xiaofeng. (2015) *Non-traditional security overview*. Beijing, Peking University Press.
- [6] Wang Jiaojiao. (2014) *Non-traditional Security Vision of China's Food Safety Supervision and Its Transformation Research*. Hangzhou, Zhejiang University.
- [7] Yu Xiaofeng. (2015) *Shared security: Chinese Perspectives on Non-Traditional Security*. Social science academic press.
- [8] Wu linhai. (2014) *China Food Safety Development Report 2014*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- [9] Li Xianguo. (2011) *Food Safety Supervision System in Developed Countries and Its Enlightenment*. *Finance and Trade Economy*, 7, 91-95.