



Food Safety and Quality Assurance in the Supply Chain of Pakistan[†]

Ali Hassan *, Muhammad Kashif Iqbal Khan , Summaia Fordos, Syed Ali Hassan, Samran Khalid and Ali Hasan

National Institute of Food Science and Technology, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad 38000, Pakistan; kashif.khan@uaf.edu.pk (M.K.I.K.); summaiafordos3435@gmail.com (S.F.); hassansyedali48@gmail.com (S.A.H.); samrankhalid08@gmail.com (S.K.); alihasanarshad786@gmail.com (A.H.)

* Correspondence: alihasan.86811@gmail.com; Tel.: +92-303-2401505

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Abstract: This study aimed to assess the food safety and quality in Pakistan's supply chain and improvement solutions to enhance consumer health and trust in the local food system by identifying critical points and proposing improvement solutions. To gather data, we conducted surveys, reviewed relevant literature, and analyzed industry reports from 500 food establishments. Our findings revealed that inadequate hygiene practices and improper handling were major contributors to foodborne illnesses in the supply chain. Based on our results, we recommend implementing standardized monitoring and testing protocols to ensure the safety and quality of food products. Additionally, the use of blockchain technology for traceability can help enhance transparency and accountability throughout the supply chain. The implications of this study are significant. Policymakers can use these findings to develop and enforce regulations that prioritize consumer safety. Industry professionals can adopt our recommendations to improve their practices and build consumer trust. Furthermore, researchers can further build upon this study to explore innovative solutions for food safety and quality in Pakistan. This study provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for enhancing food safety and quality in Pakistan's supply chain. By implementing the recommended measures, we can create a safer and more reliable food system for all consumers.

Keywords: food supply chain; food safety; food system; foodborne illness



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1. Introduction

Food safety and halal food have been extensively explored problems in food quality literature in recent years. In terms of quality, the concept of “halal” cuisine is directly tied to the availability of safe and healthy items. Food safety is probably emphasizing a similar aim, particularly from a health standpoint [1]. Because of recent important developments impacting the business, agricultural research interest in supply chain management has been drastically rising. The rapid rise of globalization, altering consumer demand, dissolution of state assistance programs, and technical advances have resulted in the proclamation of agricultural industrialization. Corporations can no longer compete in isolation from their suppliers, consumers, and other supply chain actors. The phrase supply chain management first appeared in print when Keith Oliver used it in an interview with the Financial Times in 1982. It gained significance and began to be used in the titles of operations managers as it rose in frequency in late 1990. As a result, the food supply chain includes entities in charge of producing and distributing vegetable and animal-based goods. The food supply network is complicated, with several corporations strategically collaborating in one or more sectors while retaining their own identity and autonomy. Specifically, agricultural goods are seen to be important in terms of consumption and monetary worth [2]. The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has boosted food security hazards in Asia, specifically

Pakistan. Disruptions in local and international food supply have damaged food availability and accessibility networks caused by increased health hazards and substantial travel restrictions. Domestically, upstream food supply chain interruptions have resulted from mobility constraints and Worker infections during planting and harvesting, as well as trading activities, logistics, haulage, and impeded processing. Job and income losses also reduce food consumption, placing vulnerable people at risk of hunger and malnutrition [3].

Food safety and quality assurance in Pakistan's supply chain have become crucial areas of investigation in recent years. Researchers are actively exploring ways to ensure that food products adhere to the required safety standards and maintain high quality throughout the entire supply chain. This detailed discussion will delve into the research topic objectives, shedding light on the importance of food safety and quality assurance in Pakistan's supply chain. Like every other sector in Pakistan, the fruit and vegetable business lacks proper storage, packaging, logistical assistance, and inadequate fruit and vegetable production [1].

One of the key objectives is to assess the current state of food safety practices in Pakistan's supply chain; this involves examining various stages of the fruits and vegetables supply chain, including production, processing, packaging, transportation, and storage. By evaluating the existing practices, researchers can identify potential gaps and areas for improvement. Another objective is to investigate the prevalence of foodborne illnesses and contaminants in food products within the Pakistani supply chain. This research aims to identify the specific pathogens or contaminants that pose a significant risk to public health. By understanding the sources and causes of contamination, researchers can propose measures to prevent or minimize the occurrence of foodborne illnesses.

2. Methodology

To study food safety and quality assurance in Pakistan's supply chain, we employed a suitable methodology involving qualitative and quantitative approaches. Firstly, we conducted a comprehensive literature review to gather existing information and research on food safety practices, quality assurance standards, and regulatory frameworks in the Pakistani supply chain; this provided a solid foundation for our study and helped identify research gaps. Then, we used quantitative data collection methods, such as surveys and questionnaires, to gather information from various stakeholders in the supply chain, including farmers, processors, distributors, and retailers. These surveys assessed their knowledge, practices, and attitudes toward food safety and quality assurance. The data collected were analyzed using statistical techniques to identify trends and patterns. Additionally, we employed qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus group discussions, to gain in-depth insights into the challenges and barriers stakeholders face in ensuring food safety and quality. These qualitative data provided a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and economic factors influencing food safety practices in the supply chain. Furthermore, we conducted on-site observations and inspections at different stages of the supply chain to assess the implementation of food safety measures; this involved visiting farms, processing facilities, storage warehouses, and retail outlets to observe hygiene practices, storage conditions, and adherence to quality standards. To assess the presence of contaminants and pathogens in food products, we performed laboratory analysis on samples collected from different points in the supply chain; this included testing for microbiological, chemical, and physical contaminants to ensure compliance with safety standards. Moreover, we conducted a comparative analysis of Pakistan's regulatory framework and policies related to food safety and quality assurance; this involved reviewing relevant laws, regulations, and guidelines and assessing the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical software and qualitative analysis techniques to draw meaningful conclusions and make recommendations for improving food safety and quality assurance in Pakistan's supply chain. Overall, this study employed a combination of literature review, surveys, interviews, on-site observations, laboratory analysis, and

comparative analysis of regulations to comprehensively examine food safety and quality assurance in Pakistan's supply chain.

3. Results and Discussions

It is evident that there are significant challenges that affect the quality and quantity of vegetables and fruit in the supply chain. One of the main issues is the lack of cold chain storage and food processing facilities, which leads to inefficiencies, losses, and contamination. Additionally, the reliance on intermediaries, poor road networks, broken supply chains, and insufficient cold chain facilities contribute to post-harvest losses and waste. The low delivery efficiency, unreliable commuting systems, and high packaging costs further exacerbate these challenges. However, despite these obstacles, it is important to note that Pakistan's fruit and vegetable sector has great potential for growth and development. A strong supply chain offers excellent opportunities for agriculture and community advancement. To fully capitalize on these opportunities promptly, addressing the identified issues is crucial. The supply chain can be strengthened by improving cold chain infrastructure, enhancing transportation networks, and implementing effective quality control measures; this will not only improve the quality and quantity of food products but also reduce losses and ensure a safer and more reliable supply of fresh produce.

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