



# HEALTH MATTERS

## • I N - F O C U S •

### Food Safety

World Food Safety day was celebrated on the 07 June 2024 with the theme:



**“Prepare For  
The Unexpected”**

### Introduction

The Codex Alimentarius, are international standards and guidelines which form the foundation of the standards and guidelines governed by Departments involved with food safety in South Africa.

Food safety encompasses the entire food value chain from production to consumption.

### Regulation of Food Safety

The Departments who are collectively responsible to detect, prevent, respond and/or report any food safety risks are:



**DOH:** Communicable Disease Control & Food Control.



**DTI:** National Regulator of Compulsory Specifications & National Consumer Commission.



The elimination of food health risks is crucial as unhealthy and unsafe food may cause food-borne illnesses. Food-borne illnesses are a notifiable disease.



### Terminology

- **Food safety** involves ensuring food quality and preventing contamination and food-borne illnesses by preserving it for human consumption.
- **Foodborne illnesses** are infections or irritations of the gastrointestinal tract caused by harmful bacteria, parasites, viruses, or chemicals found in food or beverages.
- **Food adulteration** involves compromising food quality by replacing or removing essential components, adding unauthorised substances, or replacing ingredients to make a profit.
- **Food contamination** refers to the presence of microorganisms like bacteria, parasites, and chemical substances in food, causing it to be unsafe for consumption.

### Statistics

420 000 people die globally every year and one in ten people fall ill after consuming contaminated and unsafe food, with the highest burden occurring in Africa.

In South Africa for the period Oct 2023 till Feb 2024 there were 1 399 reported food borne illness outbreaks, of which 964 cases were confirmed and with a total of 11 deaths reported.

### Impact of Food -Borne Illnesses

Consumption of contaminated and unsafe food is associated with life threatening diseases such as diarrhoea, fever, nausea, vomiting, bloody stools, headache, stomach pain and cramps.

Outbreaks result from poor hygiene, sanitation, handling, processing and storage practices. Such as food and water contamination, adulteration, mishandling, insects, rodents, animals, unhygienic handling and environmental contaminants.

Proper control of food production is crucial to prevent food-borne illnesses and to avoid huge economic losses due to food product recalls and withdrawals.

References:  
World Health Organization (WHO) Food safety key facts 2017.  
[www.knowledgehubdoh.org](http://www.knowledgehubdoh.org) dated June 2024.