

Abstract

The President of China, Mr. Hu Jin Tao announced year 2006 the *Year of Food Safety*. This escalated the issue of food safety to the national level, thus drawing on serious attention from all compatriots.

Consumers' degree of trust towards food safety has been consistently under 50%, indicating a very low degree of consumers' trust towards the quality of food. This generates a chain effect on all the associated issues, leading to a reduced degree of trust on the whole society overall. According to theory in Sociology, belief can be merchandised. In other words, we can treat belief as a kind of social capital, as contrast to material capital, such as money or goods. In a society with a high degree of mutual trust, effective links between different organizations can be readily developed, leading to reduced transaction cost, and hence a long term low social cost. On the contrary, the increased transaction cost inherent in a society with a low degree of belief would pose severe hindrance on the development and growth of the whole economy. Therefore, from the sociology and public administration's point of view, enhancing social belief will lower social cost, thereby improving social production and creating economy and market growth. This can be set as the society's ultimate target. To draw upon national emphasis on the food safety issue, the State Council announced year 2006 the Year of Food Safety, with an inside meaning and a far reaching implication.

The economy of Macau is highly extrovert. Its major export comes from the service industry. Macau is a small city, with only limited natural resources. Recognizing its own limitations and relative strengths, the SAR government has been emphasizing on the development of gambling industry and tourism as the powerhouse of the economy. The Chief Executive of Macau SAR had clearly stated in his 2001 Policy Address that the strategy of economic development would be centered around gambling, tourism, and convention and exhibition in the upcoming 5 to 10 years.

Safe food, good hygiene, good public order and a fair market are all important factors to the society's development. In recent years, Macau's tourists mainly come from mainland China. To attract tourists, we cannot afford to compete with China solely on the price of goods, but should instead compete on quality, on which we do maintain a leading edge. From the fact that mainland Chinese tourists prefer to buy health food and milk powder in Macau instead of from China, we can probably deduce that they have given us a vote of confidence on the quality and safety of food. To capitalize on this general tourist impression and confidence on food, we must ensure that Macau's food products are both safe and of excellent quality. Tourists do come to Macau to seek for food safety, and good food safety in turn boosts their trust. This will contribute to the sustainable development of tourism, benefiting the whole economic and social system as a result.

In Macau, the government, the public and the food product dealers are all putting emphasis on food safety. To uphold food safety, different countries would establish their own food safety systems. The generic system framework should cover various aspects in legislation, management, monitoring and laboratory establishment. In Macau, there is still much room for improvement on the associated implementation issues arisen from the generic food safety system framework.

In order to identify the main segments for improvement in the food safety system currently in Macau, a thorough research study must be conducted. The research methodology involves literature survey, theory formulation and hypothesis, data collection and analysis, as well as comparison with case studies in our neighbor, namely Hong Kong, and in advanced country, for instance, USA. With a thorough contextual analysis of existing food safety system in Macau and its possible future directions, strategies for system improvement can be derived and formulated.

The main research objective of this proposal is to investigate the current food safety system in Macau, so that we can propose improvement strategies, study their impacts, as well as define the future developing direction of the food safety system.

This thesis is composed of four parts: conceptual analysis of food safety framework, background analysis on similar frameworks elsewhere, outline of existing systems in Macau, and a critical assessment of the systems in Macau. It is organized into five chapters.

Chapter 1 is related to the conceptual analysis of food safety, including basic analysis on the importance of food safety as well as an overview of the current situation, setting the stage for the research study.

Chapter 2 & Chapter 3 contain a literature review and analysis on the background and structure of generic food safety framework worldwide. These two Chapters dedicated to the comparative study of two well-defined and comprehensive food safety systems, namely in the United States and in Hong Kong. We pay special research attention to the similarity of the food safety systems in these two regions and their applicability to the system in Macau.

In Chapter 4, we present the current food safety system in Macau, as well as the associated legislative system.

Finally, in Chapter 5, we analyze and assess the food safety management and control system in Macau from different perspectives, and compare it with its counterparts in Hong Kong and the United States. Based on our findings, we project the future development of the food safety system in Macau and propose different mechanisms and policies to improve the quality of food safety.

Key Words : Macau, Food Safety, Food Safety System