Food Safety Concerns of Vegetable Consumers in Davao City, Philippines

Hermelie R. Oracion\textsuperscript{1,}\textsuperscript{*}, Nikko L. Laorden\textsuperscript{2}, Roxanne T. Aguinaldo\textsuperscript{2}, Vlademir A. Shuck\textsuperscript{2}, and Sylvia B. Concepcion\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} UP Strategic Research and Management Foundation (UPSTREAM), Philippines
\textsuperscript{2} University of the Philippines Mindanao, Philippines

\textbf{Abstract}

Food safety has become a growing concern among vegetable consumers. Studies have shown changes in the purchasing pattern of consumers due to food safety concerns. In developed countries, food quality and safety have become increasingly important attributes being considered due to food-borne diseases. In this paper, we determined the consumers' level of food safety concern at various stages along the vegetable value chain and analyzed how it affects their purchase patterns. We conducted a mall intercept survey among 240 respondents at two supermarkets in Davao City, Philippines, using a structured questionnaire and organized focus group discussions (FGDs) to triangulate our findings. Slovin's formula was used to determine the sample size. Results showed that most of the consumers were extremely concerned with the amount of chemicals used in vegetable production, cleanliness of storage conditions, retail and entire market outlet, disposal of waste vegetables, quality of vegetables used in presliced packs, and quality of water used in washing vegetables. Ironically, despite their high level of concern on food safety, particularly on chemical residues, most of the respondents always purchase conventional vegetables and never purchase certified organic vegetables. This can be attributed to the wide price difference of certified organic and conventional vegetables. Based on FGD results, consumers emphasized the importance of certification as an assurance of safety. However, consumers demand that food quality and safety assurance should be delivered at a reasonable price. The challenge for stakeholders in the vegetable supply chains is to reduce the cost of certification while ensuring food safety and traceability along the chain.

\textbf{Keywords}

consumer survey, food safety, vegetable supply chain