Behind the WHO Five Keys to Safer Food

Why this campaign has worked for nearly two decades

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To show everyone what they can do to prevent foodborne diseases, the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced the ‘Five Keys to Safer Food’ in 2001.

Today as their 17th anniversary is celebrated, the Five Keys to Safer Food are recognized as one of the most successful campaigns and have been translated in 87 languages. Why did it work? Here are five secrets for its success.

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1. **A simple message, easy to understand, adapt and adopt**

The Five Keys to Safer Food are actionable because they are written in a plain language adapted to general public. As a result, their translation into a local language is very easy.

2. **Evidence-based recommendations**

Each Key invites the consumer to understand the ‘why’ behind the risks and what she or he can do about the risk. This increases the chances to trigger a real change in the consumer’s behaviour.

3. **A universal guidance relevant in all parts of the world**

The Five Keys are relevant both in developing and developed countries, as common interventions to reduce foodborne pathogens are basically the same all over the world. The constant message of the Five Keys stands out in the flood of information of our age. The core recommendations of the Five Keys do not need be altered in different cultural settings.

4. **Empowering consumers to get involved**

Consumers want to do something to make their food safer, but few are aware of how. The Five Keys equip consumers with knowledge that drives them to request safe food and make informed choices. When they think they cannot act on risks, they feel powerless, start to ignore or exaggerate risks, and lose confidence in food systems.

5. **Cross-sector integration in a wider context**

When used in health promotion and education, the Five Keys can build dialogue and collaboration between different stakeholders from various sectors (health, agriculture, education, tourism, environment). All over the world, central and local authorities, schools, NGOs, food industry, consumers organizations use the Five Keys in health promotion campaigns, targeting health professionals, food handlers, food inspectors, adults and children, women and men.

Building on the success of the Five Keys to Safer Food, WHO produced the *Five Keys to Growing Safer Fruits and Vegetables* and the *Five Keys to Safer Aquaculture Products to Protect Public Health* to promote hygienic practices from farm to table. The Five Keys to Safer Food are now included in the recommendations for consumers to combat antimicrobial resistance.

The take-up by countries shows that simple messages coming from a trusted source can make a lasting difference.

Five Keys to Safer Food video available in 18 languages