

28 November 2007

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia has always maintained zero tolerance towards food contamination, with food safety being practised from farm to table.

Malaysia has agreed that food safety is a consumer issue. It is our responsibility to ensure it for our people, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek said yesterday during his presentation on Food Safety Authorities Network (Infosan): The Malaysian Experience, at the International Food Safety Forum in Beijing.

To ensure food in Malaysia is safe, monitoring was carried out at 34 entry points and along the food chain, with inspections conducted at food premises, he said.

We believe this will provide good healthcare and ensure people's confidence in safe and healthy food in the market.

Dr Chua added that food safety had also become a trans-boundary issue, and it was more important than ever to have an international system to respond to food safety emergencies or issues, and for sharing information.

The system of information exchange on food safety is needed for early identification and rapid characterisation of problems, to increase preparedness and response to manage risks, and to deal effectively with consumers' concerns and fears.

He also proposed that global coverage for information was needed where all countries should join the Infosan network, be transparent in sharing information in food safety emergencies and maximise the use of Infosan.

He cited the beta agonist in pork episode, where contamination was reduced by 70% within a week because of strict measures and enforcement.

The Infosan network comprises the Infosan Secretariat housed at the World Health Organisation in Geneva, National Infosan focal points and Infosan emergency contact points.

In Malaysia, both the Infosan emergency contact point and national focal point are at the Food Safety and Quality Division of the Health Ministry.