

**Research Poster from the
Consumer and Market Demand Agricultural Policy Research Network
Enabling Research for a Competitive Agriculture**



ABSTRACT CMD-07

Food Risks: Concerns and Policy Issues

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Food safety concerns and practices continue to be major issues for consumers, industry and governments. Examples of recent food safety incidents in Canada include the 2008 listeriosis contamination of Maple Leaf deli cuts, a serious Canada-based food safety problem that led to the death of 22 Canadians and was the subject of a national Investigative Review. Food incidents in 2009 include confirmation of the 15th case of the animal disease BSE in a Canadian cow (in May) and a continuing series of food recalls due, for example, to the possibility of *salmonella* bacteria in fresh spinach and green onions (in September) and granola bar products (in November), as well as problems of *Listeria monocytogenes* in deli meat (September) and wild salmon products (October and November). Concerns about antibiotic use in food production and potential impacts on antibiotic resistance affecting humans were expressed periodically in press reports in 2008. European and Japanese import restrictions on Canadian flaxseed in 2009 have been based on concerns about low levels of contamination by non-licensed GMO varieties. These various types of food technologies, practices and issues raise questions about the confidence of Canadian consumers in the safety of food and their assessments of such possible food risks. This poster will focus on consumers' assessments of selected food risks, based on analysis of the current status of Canadian consumer's concerns about major types of food safety issue, using risk ratings data from an August 2009 nation-wide survey of more than 1,000 Canadians' food risk perceptions, health attitudes and stated preferences regarding functional food. This set of food risk ranking data enable a comparative analysis of whether and how Canadian's food risk attitudes have changed in the last decade, assessment of implications of this for food policy. For this purpose, the 2009 data is being analyzed and the findings from this analysis will be compared with Canadian's food risk attitudes identified in earlier analyses based on Canada-wide responses to the identical set of food risk survey questions that were applied in 2003 and 2005 (Veeman and Li, 2007). This will enable assessment of whether changes observed from the 2005 data set, relative to the 2003 survey, are consistent with 2009 concerns, or whether there is a tendency for risk assessments to have varied as have recent food risk events. (As one example, analysis of the 2005 data, collected after the first few Canadian BSE confirmations, suggested that Canadians were less concerned about BSE at that time than they had been in 2003, prior to the first BSE incident. In contrast, although GM-derived foods were not seen as very high food risk issues in either 2003 or 2005, overall there was a greater tendency to classify these as higher risk in 2005 than in 2003. Whether these were transitory or continuing changes is relevant to stakeholders in the food industry). The objectives, overall, for this poster are: to analyze the ordered risk ratings of the 2009 food risk data set; based on the results of this, to undertake a comparative analysis of changes over time in Canadians' views of food risks; to draw conclusions from these analyses about policy issues; and, finally, to gain feedback participants of the Policy Conference on these analyses.