

CMD 518

518 – An Application of a Formal Risk Ranking Model in Determining Priorities for Food Safety Policy Researchers:

Researcher: Cindy Jardine - University of Alberta

Research Summary

This research proposes to apply a formal model of risk-ranking to determine priorities in food safety using both experts in the field and laypersons. The use of a formal model is to provide consistency in allocating resources to areas in which both the public and experts can agree. This project will apply a model developed by researchers at Carnegie Mellon University (CM Model) to six food safety issues commonly appearing in the media. A combination of risk-ranking exercises and focus group discussions will be employed. The comparison of the results between the expert group and the layperson group will help to determine whether governments and other policy-makers are considering the same issues as the public.

Note: Approval has been received for this project by the AFHE Research Ethics Board as of March 6, 2006. This research is to be used as the major body of work for Kevin Webster's Master of Science degree in Food Science & Technology in the Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science.

Significance of Research

Current priority setting is highly subjective and dependent on the political and economical environment of the jurisdiction setting the priorities. There are several risk ranking models in development throughout the world but these have not been applied directly to ranking of food safety concerns.

Health Canada (HC) has expressed interest in this type of research, as this organization is attempting to move to a risk-based approach for regulation of food products. A risk-ranking model such as the one being tested in this research is of value to HC since this will provide a tool to help achieve this goal. As well, international health organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) desire increased public participation in policy setting in member countries. As a result the trickle down effect is seen whereby local jurisdictions should also be asking for more public participation. By determining the similarities and differences in priority setting via this research, insight into how this increased participation can be accommodated may be investigated. Ensuring that the public interests are being met will also result in increased government efficiency.