

Food firms say innovation comes with health risks

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By Ted Chen

TAIPEI, Taiwan - In light of last year's numerous food safety and labeling scandals, a number of food company executives yesterday stepped forward to advise consumers to choose food products more diversely and consume more unprocessed foods.

Food company executives stated that the pursuit of innovations in foods and condiment products, such as low-sodium soy sauces may come at the cost of health risks.

As consumers seek products bearing either more appetizing flavors or healthier attributes of lower salt, fat and oil contents, food products must undergo additional processing that may be ultimately be no less harmful than their conventional variants, executives said.

According to Ve Wong President Chen Gong-ping, the so-called "low-sodium" soy sauces found on store shelves merely replace chlorinated sodium with chlorinated potassium.

While overconsumption of sodium leads to heart disease, excess intake of potassium is ranked among the leading causes of kidney disease, said Chen. Therefore, consumers are advised to exercise diversity in their food and condiment selections, and avoid prolonged intake of any single product to mitigate health risks.

A food company executive who did not wish to be identified also revealed that the now-prevalent healthier variant of MSG is essentially nothing more than conventional MSG with different flavoring.

Food company executives advised the public to exercise wider diversity in food choices, including selection of restaurants, and consume less processed food products, and more unprocessed food ingredients to minimise potential health impacts from further food scandals.

Executives also stated that while the government is scrambling to devise comprehensive amendments and regulatory measures, it is unlikely that sweeping changes will be completed in the near future.

Food company executives advised consumers to exercise caution in purchases, and avoid products featuring especially vibrant colors, that are likely to be the result of potentially harmful additives.

Questions:

1. What comes up to your mind first when you hear food unsafety?
2. What reasons do you think it causes food unsafety?
3. What can we do to decrease food unsafety?
4. Do you think local food is safer than imported food?
5. Do you read it's ingredients before buying any product?
6. If you want to save money, would you chose to save on food?
7. There are so many products that are claimed that they have Zero Calorie, do you believe that?
8. How can we do to draw people's attention on food security?
9. Think about your eating habits, which do you care more? "Flavor" or "nutrition"?
10. Cancer has been on the top of the leading causes of death in Taiwan, do you think it's related to our eating habits? Then what's wrong with our eating habits?