

Food safety in Canada is lax and needs better oversight, says CMAJ

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Canada needs better regulation and oversight of food safety to protect Canadians as the current system is lax, states an editorial in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

"Canada's public and private sectors are not doing enough to prevent food-borne illnesses," writes Dr. Paul Hébert, Editor-in-Chief with coauthors. "Among the major failings are inadequate active surveillance systems, an inability to trace foods from "farm to fork" and a lack of incentives to keep food safe along the "farm to fork" pathway."

Canada rates in the middle of the pack in rate of control of some food borne pathogens, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's World Ranking: 2010 [food safety](#) performance. The same report ranks our food industries and government agencies second last (15th out of 16) in knowing where food originates, how it is processed and the journey to the consumer.

The country needs more rigorous food safety standards and a surveillance mechanism. The authors argue that better government policies and standards are required, as are incentives for industry to encourage improvements in food safety.

"Private and public oversight of food safety should be reformed to ensure sufficiently uniform practices across the country so that we can make comparisons among different regions, suppliers and types of food," they write.

"Food will never be sterile and risk-free. However, without changes, many people will be harmed and some will die because of preventable contamination," they conclude.

More information: <http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/doi/10.1503/cmaj.110453>

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