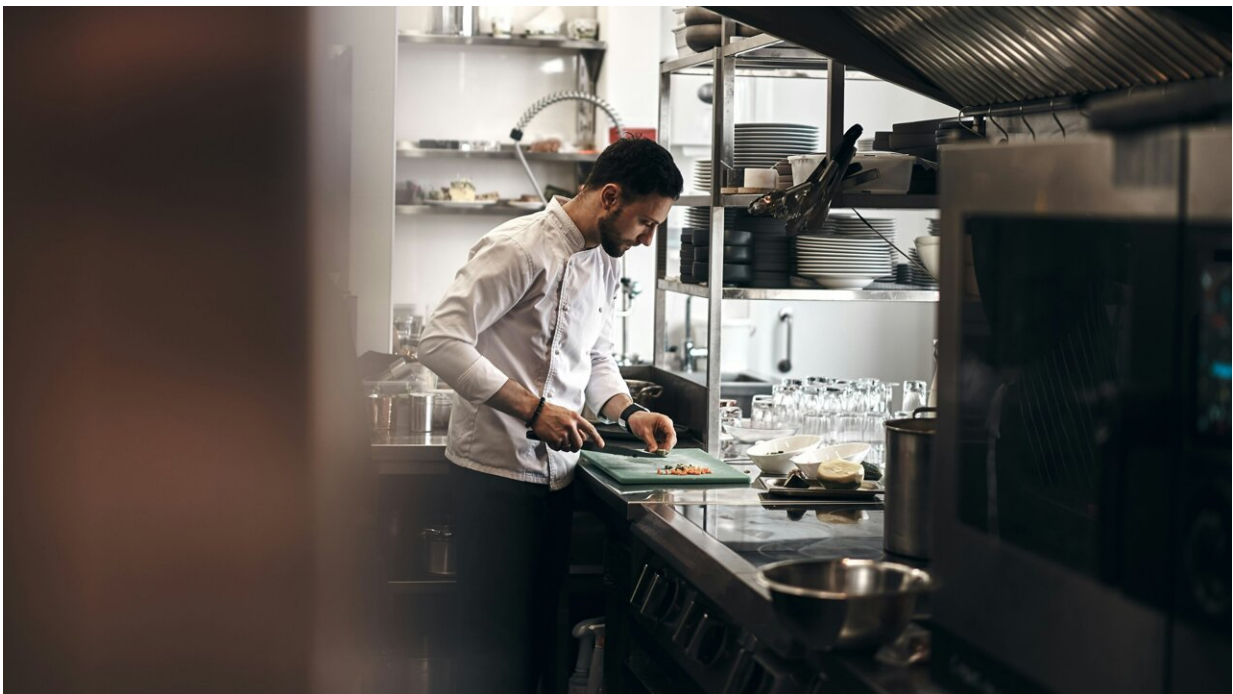


Research highlights benchmarks for food safety standards

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Australia's high standards for food safety inspections set the bar high for cafes, restaurants and other shop owners to maintain hygiene standards, but new research by environmental health experts promotes the potential

for more uniform and possible improvements in guidelines and training around the world.

The Flinders University and La Trobe University study compared responses from 267 environmental health practitioners (EHPs) in Australia with online survey data from New Zealand, the United Kingdom, U.S. and Ireland to analyze their roles and responsibilities.

"Our research shows their approaches to food [safety inspections](#) are similar between all of these countries," says La Trobe University public health lecturer and Flinders Ph.D., Jason Barnes, about a [new article](#), "Performing food safety inspections," in *Food Control*.

"While there were differences in the laws, cultural and individual approach of inspectors between jurisdictions there was a high level of uniformity which can form the baseline for future standardization or regulation changes to conduct even better food inspections."

Every year foodborne bacteria and contamination cause millions of productivity hours lost to various illnesses. The most common cause of [food poisoning](#) is eating food contaminated by harmful bacteria.

Common symptoms include diarrhea, [stomach cramps](#), nausea, vomiting and fever. Food poisoning can be very serious and can even cause death.

Food safety legislation, policy and codes are largely focused on the standards and conditions required for food to be produced safely, rather than prescribing how inspections should be carried out.

Co-author Professor Kirstin Ross, from Flinders University's Environmental Health research group, says there are limits to the formal

guidelines to inform the best way to perform food safety inspections.

"Although food safety inspections can be the bane of business owners' lives, we know that regular and thorough inspections are necessary.

"Foodborne illnesses not only cause several days of discomfort but can prove very debilitating or even fatal for more vulnerable members of the community.

"Our research will now investigate what best-practice food safety inspections might look like and provide guidelines for EHPs and support health authorities to implement these changes."

Consistent and thorough food safety inspections should be based on the latest knowledge, not historical systems, and not just rely on prescriptive or outdated methodology, the researchers say.

More information: Jason B. Barnes et al, Performing food safety inspections, *Food Control* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.foodcont.2024.110329](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodcont.2024.110329)

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