

America's Food Supply - Are Offshore Bargains Mitigating All-American Quality?

I was recently stunned by some disturbing news about the "Hostess Twinkie" snack cake. It turns out that the deliciously sweet and tasty staple of the baby boomer generation is no longer All-American. "Can you believe that?" It turns out that along with many other non-traceable imported additives, it now contains a really wholesome sounding ingredient called thiamine mononitrate - a product that comes from petroleum. Chinese petroleum to be precise. Produced in Chinese refineries and repackaged in Chinese factories. "Is anything sacred anymore? Do you think we could get an RDA from the FDA on that important non-nutrient?"

As it turns out, my ignorance of such matters in all likelihood parallels that of the typical American consumer. It seems we've simply been 'asleep at the wheel'. While most of us have been snoozing, the Chinese have gradually chipped away at the world's industrial and manufacturing markets gaining an ever-increasing share of production and profits. Ingenuity, quicker product delivery and lower prices have all contributed to their remarkable growth. Now, I'm certain it's been a win-win situation in many markets, but I can't help expressing concern when price and production capacity begin to compromise or threaten food safety and consumer health.

The recent and tragic events surrounding the contamination of pet food was a much-needed wake-up call for most Americans. It exposed the startling reality of a food system at risk and a bureaucratic infrastructure that's ill equipped to provide the necessary checks and balances for food safety and quality assurance. In the current state of poorly regulated and inspected food additives and products, we can be assured that the more we outsource, the less control we have over quality or safety.

A recent headline remarked, "if you pop a vitamin C tablet in your mouth, it's a good bet it came from China". Not surprisingly, many of the world's vitamins are indeed now manufactured in China. Statistics also show that during the past ten years, China has captured an estimated 90 percent of the U.S. market for vitamin C. Additionally, it supplies America with the bulk of its vitamins A, B12 and E, while quietly driving nearly everyone else out of business.

Chinese pharmaceutical companies have also taken over much of the world market in the production of antibiotics, analgesics, enzymes and primary amino acids. According to industry estimates, China makes about 70 of its aspirin and 35% of its acetaminophen (Tylenol).

Fortunately for everyone, most of China's industry is highly skilled, self-regulating and consistently producing high quality products. However, the lower tiers of Chinese industry are quite a different story. Many factories are dirty with older machinery and have no system for regulating sanitation or quality. Inspectors have little interest in public health or safety since many either work for the same company they're inspecting or they're employed by the city governments which are in fact, part owners of the companies they're allegedly "regulating".

The big problem for consumers, who may wish to avoid certain products from sources known to be risky is that, at present, U.S. laws don't require food and drug sellers to label products with the country of origin of ingredients, which makes it impossible for consumers to know where food or supplements are coming from, not to mention which factory produced them. I think it's fair to say that proper nutrition and food safety is difficult enough for us consumers when the system is working properly. What makes it easy for the bad guys is that we Americans tend to take an awful lot for granted by assuming that everyone is doing their job properly to protect us. But, how can we expect quality control when so few distributors and manufacturers know the true source of their ingredient.

While it may be a little too late for the "Twinkie" we can only hope that our members of Congress will finally take the necessary action to put proper controls in place that will ensure the safety and security of our vulnerable food supply.

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Harry Monell is devoting time writing helpful articles and maintaining New Day Nutrients.com, a website dedicated to promoting better health and vitality by providing useful information, advice and the latest news covering a wide range of health and nutritional topics. For additional information and important resources, please visit [New Day Nutrients](#)