

A Dozen Measures to Improve Food Safety

Insuring hygienic, contaminant-free food in Bosnia and Herzegovina will require the following steps, according to recommendations that reporters for the Center for Investigative Reporting in Sarajevo (CIN) heard from inspectors, vendors, traders, restaurateurs, bureaucrats and people who eat throughout the country.

1. Inspectors at BiH border crossing points need computers, software and other equipment similar to European Union countries so that they can talk with each other and track what shipments are coming into the country and where they are going.
2. BiH needs to research the cost and feasibility of building incineration facilities so that meat and contaminated food products can be destroyed in an environmentally safe way.
3. Laws and regulations must be updated to regulate the processing and use of meat products, especially of skin and internal organs, meat scraped from heads and joints, and deboned chicken.
4. All food production and sales facilities must register with appropriate government agencies to insure that they will be subject to regular inspection.
5. Inspection agencies need to conduct ongoing education of vendors and restaurateurs about proper food handling and hygiene standards.
6. Inspectors and police must work together to put a stop to illegal vending.
7. An array of inspectors working at different levels of government and classified as veterinary, market and sanitary specialists need to coordinate, communicate and consolidate so that they are working together.

8. Inspectors and courts must impose quicker and harsher punishments against restaurants and food shops for violating hygiene standards, especially when consumers end up hospitalized.
9. To keep track of and to control against cattle-born illnesses, cattle in BiH must be counted and tagged.
10. Customs and inspection officials must work jointly and more assiduously to prevent cattle and food smuggling.
11. Non-governmental agencies involved in consumer protection must work jointly on adopting and implementing a plan of action to educate and protect citizens.
12. BiH needs, like most modern countries, a single state-level Ministry of Agriculture.