

Letter to Editor

Investigating the Impacts of COVID-19 on the Food Industry



Ameneh Marzban¹ , Payam Emami² , Shandiz Moslehi^{1*}

1. Department of Health in Disasters and Emergencies, School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

2. Department of Emergency Medical Sciences, School of Paramedical Sciences, Kurdistan University of Medical Sciences, Sanandaj, Iran.



Citation Marzban A, Emami P, Moslehi S. Investigating the Impacts of COVID-19 on the Food Industry. *Journal of Research & Health*. 2023; 13(6):389-390. <http://dx.doi.org/10.32598/JRH.13.6.2083.9>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.32598/JRH.13.6.2083.9>

Dear Editor

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted positively and negatively a variety of industries, including the food industry [1-3]. Meanwhile, the food industry is more affected by this disease compared to other industries because of its wide relationship with the household and the community. Various places, such as restaurants, coffee shops, hotels, and schools were either closed during this period or did not provide services same as in the past. As a result, many blows were inflicted on such industries. The demand for food by households decreased during this period and caused a part of the food market to be lost [4]. Global average prices for a variety of food products increased by 2% to 9% with half of the tracked goods rising by 7% or more [5].

The reduction in trade delegations' visits to production lines had other effects on production and investment in the food industry. In the meantime, the closure of industry and food fairs has eliminated new marketing opportunities, exports, and interaction between industry actors to attract new capital. Meanwhile, the reduction of trade delegations' visits to production lines, had other effects

on production and investment in the food industry [6]. COVID-19 also affected the health of food industry activists, both simple labor and professionals, as the food industry was one of the industries that continued to produce uninterrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic [7]. However, COVID-19 has created new opportunities in the food industry [4]; changing the way food is supplied and distributed, eliminating an important part of the problems of food distribution, and strengthening online food purchases, which made online sales of the model more cost-effective [5]. This method reduces traffic in the city and along with store costs. In addition, online food sales have reduced warehousing costs for both producers and distributors [5, 8].

Improving transparency in purchases, enabling direct communication between customers and producers, shortening the food distribution chain, and increasing producer and consumer profits, creating a larger and more diverse market that increases competition for supply, reducing production costs and direct producer access to the market based on real demand, reducing waste and maintaining optimal food quality and health are all COVID-19 opportunities in the industry [4]. These benefits include more flexibility, improved productivity,

*** Corresponding Author:**

Shandiz Moslehi, PhD.

Address: Department of Health in Disasters and Emergencies, School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

Phone: +98 (917) 2458896

E-mail: shandizmoslehi@gmail.com

more job autonomy, improved work-life balance, and reduced commuting time and costs. Remote work can also provide more and better work opportunities for populations that have been excluded, including people with disabilities, older workers, workers with care responsibilities, and workers living in rural or isolated areas [7, 9].

With the elimination of COVID-19, although the situation will return to normal, the experience of online shopping benefits a wide range of customers and will not be completely ignored. This shopping model will open its place in people's lives more than before. While many distributors of goods, even traditional distributors and marketers, were forced to experience online sales due to the COVID-19 pandemic, after controlling the disease, this part of the sellers do not ignore such an advantage and use it as a new source of revenue [10].

The food industry has made many changes because of the pandemic, including production and processing with fundamental challenges, such as ensuring food safety and security. Reducing the costs of producing new engineered food products, recovering and reusing waste in the food chain, and creating new food supply chains will increase food security and sustainability. However, online sales as one of the most important benefits of the COVID-19 outbreak have found significant positions in the traditional Iranian market which cannot be easily taken back. In the future, based on online sales capacity and facilities, the distribution structure in Iran will undergo other changes. This can be seen as one of the most important hopes for improving the problems of the distribution chain and even more plans to strengthen this newly created possibility of the Iranian market.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

There were no ethical considerations to be considered in this research.

Funding

This research did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

Authors' contributions

All authors contributed equally to preparing this article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

The authors present their gratitude for the Vice-Chancellor of Research and Technology in **Iran University of Medical Sciences** for providing us the access to scientific databases.

References

- [1] Darand M, Hassanizadeh S, Marzban A, Mirzaei M, Hosseinzadeh M. The association between dairy products and the risk of COVID-19. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2022; 76(11):1583-9. [DOI:10.1038/s41430-022-01149-8] [PMID]
- [2] Marzban A, Yoshany N, Mozaffari-Khosravi H, Khaleghi Moori M, Maayeshi N, Zamani M. Nutritional knowledge, attitude, and practices related to COVID-19 in people of Yazd, 2021. *Journal of Nutrition and Food Security*. 2022; 7(1):22-9. [DOI:10.18502/jnfs.v7i1.8532]
- [3] Marzban A, Khabiri F, Anbari Nogyni Z. Nutrition during COVID-19. *Journal of Nutrition and Food Security*. 2021; 6(2):98-100. [DOI:10.18502/jnfs.v6i2.6059]
- [4] Nakat Z, Bou-Mitri C. COVID-19 and the food industry: Readiness assessment. *Food Control*. 2021; 121:107661. [DOI:10.1016/j.foodcont.2020.107661] [PMID]
- [5] Aday S, Aday MS. Impact of COVID-19 on the food supply chain. *Food Quality and Safety*. 2020; 4(4):167-80. [DOI:10.1093/fqsafe/fyaa024]
- [6] Güney OI, Sangün L. How COVID-19 affects individuals' food consumption behaviour: A consumer survey on attitudes and habits in Turkey. *British Food Journal*. 2021; 123(7):2307-20. [DOI:10.1108/BFJ-10-2020-0949]
- [7] Sarvela A, Läikkö-Roto T, Lundén J. Covid-19 pandemic induced measures in food industry improves food safety as perceived by food business operators in Finland. *International journal of Environmental Health Research*. 2023; 1-14. [DOI:10.1080/09603123.2023.2185210] [PMID]
- [8] Barman A, Das R, De PK. Impact of COVID-19 in food supply chain: Disruptions and recovery strategy. *Current Research in Behavioral Sciences*. 2021; 2:100017. [DOI:10.1016/j.crbeha.2021.100017]
- [9] Criscuolo C, Gal P, Leidecker T, Losma F, Nicoletti G. The role of telework for productivity during and post-COVID-19: Results from an OECD survey among managers and workers. Berlin: OECD publishing; 2021. [Link]
- [10] Chang HH, Meyerhoefer CD. COVID-19 and the demand for online food shopping services: Empirical evidence from Taiwan. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. 2021; 103(2):448-65. [DOI:10.1111/ajae.12170]