

# Food supplies: Threats to the supply chain in the food service industry

<https://marketpublishers.com/r/FA218BFEEAA6EN.html>

Date: February 2018

Pages: 14

Price: US\$ 495.00 (Single User License)

ID: FA218BFEEAA6EN

## Abstracts

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### SUMMARY

Foodservice, particularly in restaurant form, suffers when costs rise due to it being one of the most controllable areas of spending for most people. Producers should take note. Various environmental threats in the oceans and on land threaten to interrupt supply and make products more expensive.

For businesses that are predicated upon reliability, convenience and speed, environmental factors constitute a rising threat to the key points of attraction many customers demand. The industry will have to adapt by ensuring supplies are more secure and sourced from sustainable sources. Many consumers are becoming more environmentally aware, driving the growth of flexitarians, and it will become of increasing importance in the coming years.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Frequently cited as a leading cause of many environmental problems, industrialization has a long history of contaminating land with dangerous substances and metals that new species of animals have evolved to cope. China has been badly impacted by poisoned soil - more so than most other rapidly developing nations.

This poses a very real problem for the foodservice industry: toxins and other contaminants remain in the soil for centuries and cleaning up large areas of land

is prohibitively troublesome to do. (It took 21 years and the removal of 1,200 cubic meters of soil to clean up the Love Canal, a site covering just 6.5 hectares.)

During 2014 the Chinese government revealed some of the results of a survey conducted on the condition of large tracts of land: 16.1% of all soil and 19.4% of farmland was contaminated by organic and inorganic chemical pollutants and by metals such as lead, cadmium and arsenic. Cadmium and arsenic were found in 40% of the affected land; 35,000 square kilometers of farmland is so polluted that no agriculture is to be allowed.

Oceanic dead-zones - portions of water in which oxygen levels are so low few, if any, creatures are able to survive - have expanded rapidly over the course of the past few decades.

Fertilizers washing off farmland are frequently cited as the leading cause and one which has become worse with the onset of ever greater intensification of farming brought on by the supposedly 'green revolution'. Algae feed on the waste flushed into the oceans, robbing oxygen and making life almost impossible to sustain.

For food service companies this is a very serious problem. Dead-zones can fluctuate wildly according to the quantities of fertilizer washing off land and into the water system, as well as weather conditions both out at sea and on land.

Supply of fish, therefore, is much less guaranteed than was previously the case. The dead-zone recorded in the Gulf of Mexico during 2017 was predicted to reach an area roughly congruent with the state of New Jersey.

## SCOPE

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization reported global fish production is reaching its limit. Around 90% of stocks are now fully fished or overfished; a 17% increase in production is forecast by 2025. Overexploitation of fish stocks has tripled since the 1970s and approximately 40% of fish species are now being caught unsustainably.

Excessive fishing increases the possibilities of invasive species, harming habitats. Destructive fishing techniques such as bottom trawling - where a large net with heavy weights is dragged across the seafloor, scooping up everything in its path - exacerbate the problems.

Rising populations in areas with extensive fishing industries are placing ever greater pressure upon stocks.

Fishing vessels are reporting higher rates of jellyfish being caught, an indicator that many species around the world are being overfished and habitat destruction is rife, in areas such as the South China Sea. Overfishing, which removes top predators from the sea, is one of the factors behind jellyfish blooms.

## **REASONS TO BUY**

What are the major changes happening in the foodservice industry?

Who are the major players implementing those changes

What problems does the industry currently face?

What does the future of the industry look like?

Are there any major opportunities for players to capitalize on?

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