Research on Social Responsibility of Chinese Food Enterprises

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Abstract — Health is a matter of concern to everyone, which is an important foundation and premise for individual survival and development. A healthy life guarantees the dignity of life. However, in recent years, major events in food have revealed that people's health is under threat. In China, coronavirus originated from the seafood market in south China, in which food companies played a key role. Thus, we start thinking about the social responsibility of food enterprises. From the perspective of ISO 26000 international standard on social responsibility, this paper systematically discusses and answers the questions of what is the social responsibility of food enterprises, what obligations enterprises have in food security, and how to construct the social responsibility of food enterprises.

1. INTRODUCTION
Health is everyone's concern, which is an important basis and premise for personal survival and development. However, in recent years, a series of major food incidents have exposed the threat to people's health. Escherichia coli has caused tens of thousands of food poisoning. The "mad cow disease" that shakes the whole world, discovered in the United Kingdom, also spread to more than 30 countries and regions such as Ireland, Portugal, France gradually. There is also the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020. Although the source of COVID-19 has not been determined by researchers, it cannot be denied that a large number of coronaviruses were detected in the seafood market in south China. Thus, we start to think about the social responsibility of food enterprises.

2. FOOD ENTERPRISES AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Ever since corporate social responsibility was proposed, it has been a hot topic for scholars, and also a social issue that has been paid close attention by the practical circle. As a national pillar industry related to the national economy and people's livelihood, the social responsibility issue of the food industry has attracted much attention. From a global perspective, corporate social responsibility has become a big trend, and gradually from ethics to law and standard management. Food enterprises have a natural and inseparable relationship with social responsibility from its characteristics. At present, food enterprises also began to pay attention to social responsibility, some companies released social responsibility report. With the development of economy, food entrepreneurs have increasingly profound understanding of social responsibility, and quite a few food enterprises have taken the fulfillment of social responsibility as an important part of their core competitiveness. Those food enterprises that have the courage to assume social responsibility have also won more development opportunities and competitive advantages.

In the rapidly changing Internet era, which is different from the traditional market environment in the past, food enterprises not only need form core competitiveness, but also need win the recognition
and respect of the whole society to achieve faster and more long-term development. Taking social responsibility is undoubtedly an important way for food enterprises to gain social recognition.

Since the products of food enterprises are related to the life and health of citizens, their social responsibilities will have definite particularity. The fulfillment and disclosure of social responsibilities of the food industry is not only related to itself, but also to the consumers, the government, the public and other stakeholders.

2.1 Be noticed

People cannot live without food. Consumers' attention to food has aroused close attention to the social responsibility of food enterprises. Even small events tend to spread widely. In the past, information media were underdeveloped and what happened in food enterprises was only known to a few people. With the advent of the Internet age, information has spread beyond geographical limits and rapidly to all parts of the world via the Internet. Based on the interactivity of social network, information dissemination and feedback speed are fast. Consumers are both receivers and suppliers of information. The development of network media provides a convenient way for the public to pay attention to the social responsibility of food enterprises.

2.2 Internet technology has a disruptive impact on food companies

More and more traditional food enterprises from offline to online, both brand and sales have achieved an unprecedented breakthrough. The emergence of the Internet undoubtedly provides the best development platform for these enterprises. Through the Internet and the express, the traditional food industry from the local to the national, has become the best way to build corporate brand and to reach consumers. For many traditional food companies, this is not an easy road. It activates some traditional food enterprises and also brings challenges on the management. In the Internet era, the increase of information sources and channels has also accelerated the spread of false information. Wechat, weibo and other media have become the major areas for the spread of food safety rumors. Once there are food safety incidents, brief information vacuum easily lead to consumer panic, which draw public attention to false information.

2.3 Once trust is broken, it is easy to fall into a vicious circle.

This has to do with consumer psychology. Consumers' cognition and judgment of food safety problems are based on subjective perception. When a food has a problem, consumers regard it as a symptom of problems in various food industries and believe that food safety problems are widespread. Consumers' lack of trust in food manufacturers makes it difficult for new manufacturers to establish brand reputation, so they have to continuously provide low-quality products. This, in turn, has deepened widespread consumer distrust of product quality, which has delayed the emergence of credible brands in food production.

2.4 The fulfillment of social responsibility of food enterprises needs the joint efforts of the whole industrial chain

First, it has to do with the food production process. There are many kinds of food, different length of processing procedures, wide range of market circulation, and lack of unity between production and consumption markets. Second, it has to do with the fragmented state of the food industry. Small producers lack the awareness and initiative to take preventive measures against food safety problems. There may be problems in every link of the product supply chain. Food enterprises should establish the concept of social responsibility management in the whole process.

3. Measures

According to ISO 26000, social responsibility means “responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that contributes to sustainable development, including health and the welfare of society; takes into account the expectations of stakeholders; is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its
relationships” [1]. ISO 26000 provides a general guide of social responsibility practices for all organizations.

To identify relevant issues and set its priorities, food enterprises should address the seven core subjects (see Fig. 1): organizational governance; human rights; labor practices; the environment; fair operating practices; consumer issues and community involvement and development. From the perspective of stakeholders, we assume that food enterprises should actively fulfill their social responsibilities to consumers, industrial chain partners, creditors, employees, environment, government and community stakeholders.

**Fig. 1 Core subjects bases on ISO 26000.**

4. **PROBLEMS**

4.1 **Lack of sense of responsibility in the food industry**

Since the reform and opening up, the development of food industry has shown a vigorous momentum, but the sense of responsibility of food enterprises has not been strengthened simultaneously. First, the primary agricultural product source pollution is more serious. China's traditional agricultural production technology and supervision are relatively backward, and the drug residues in the production process of agricultural products exceed the standard. For their own interests, some merchants maliciously sell harmful agricultural products, and some agricultural products are also faced with the double pollution effects of their own and surrounding environment. Second, the huge market consumption demand has brought about the vigorous development of China's food industry. In the stage when the market economy is still not perfect, the production and operation of fake and low-quality food is repeatedly prohibited. In order to pursue "color, flavor and taste" food, some food enterprises have unscrupulous behavior, such as excessive use of food additives to increase the taste of food, and so on. These food enterprises disregard the lives and health of the public.

4.2 **Lack of global risk awareness and posterior.**

In the era of globalization, unsafe food brings risks to health, which is global and has a posterior effect. As the daily necessities of life, food is related to people's quality of life. High-quality and healthy food can meet people's demand for nutrition and health, while poor quality, unsafe and unhygienic products will threaten consumers' health. In the era of globalization, the convenience of international circulation of food makes food safety risks become common risks that need to be faced by the whole world. However, the increasingly serious environmental pollution and food contamination caused by many human factors pose a great threat to food safety. Because the adverse effects of food insecurity are posterior to a certain extent, that is, the problems can only be known after consumption, or even after long-term consumption to a certain extent, will cause the relevant adverse results, but it has often caused irreversible damage to consumers. Affected by the severity of food contamination and the antiviral ability of consumer groups, some food safety risks have a relatively long incubation period, and some are even difficult to manifest in the limited life of human beings. Only when an individual
food safety incident has a certain degree of harm to human health, a certain population size and a relatively short period of concentrated outbreak, will it cause widespread public concern. Once the outbreak of related problems, it will not only endanger the lives and health of consumers, but also will cause irreversible impact on the reputation of the corresponding food industry.

4.3 Lack of wholeness
Food enterprises are involved in many links, no matter which link problems will affect the quality of food. In the production link, there is the phenomenon of excessive use of fertilizer and feed. In the process of processing and production, some enterprises use food additives on a large scale, which seriously endangers the health of consumers. In the process of transportation and storage, if the sanitary conditions are not up to standard, it will result in food contamination. Food industry chain is long and prone to linkage effect, once appear food accident, which will be broader and difficult to trace to the source of problem. Food enterprises as the core enterprise in the industry chain, it is often need to assume greater social responsibility. Therefore, food enterprises have a dual mission. They should not only ensure their social responsibility level, but also guide enterprises in the whole industrial chain to effectively assume social responsibility, so as to ensure the quality and safety of food.

4.4 Lack of environmental awareness
Food enterprises still need to improve environmental protection, such as energy conservation and emission reduction. It is inevitable to produce a lot of waste water and garbage in the process of production of food enterprises. Especially for a large number of small and micro food enterprises, due to their limited strength, it is often difficult for them to carry out waste water treatment and discharge in accordance with national standards. In order to reduce the cost, some enterprises discharge waste directly without treatment, which seriously pollutes the environment where they are located. In addition, many food enterprises exist excessive packaging, lack of environmental awareness. More disposable and non-degradable materials are used, which leads to a flood of packaging waste. Such excessive packaging not only causes a waste of resources, but also causes damage to the ecological environment, which seriously affects the sustainable development of food enterprises.

5. SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Organizational governance
Establish food social responsibility management system. As for food enterprises, they should not only let consumers get the food they need, but also let them get safe and healthy food. The provision of healthy and nutritious food by food enterprises is the concrete embodiment of social responsibility. Food enterprises should meet consumers' requirements for health and quality of life and improve their social responsibility management of food. They also should actively participate in the construction of anti-corruption, pay taxes and provide employment. All these will create and maintain a good market environment and social atmosphere for food enterprises, which will further promote the development of food enterprises.

5.2 Human rights and labor practices
Employees create value for enterprises through labor, and the quality of their work will be reflected in the quality of products produced, which is directly related to consumers and other stakeholders. Once the rights and interests of employees did not get the basic safeguard, which will not only make the enterprise is faced with the problem of brain drain, and can lead to the negative emotions of employees slacking, which directly reflected in the food processing production process, leading to the production efficiency is low, can appear even food quality problems. So food companies should actively undertake social responsibility for employees, such as gender equality, respect for human rights, give employees a reasonable salary and welfare treatment and pay attention to the spiritual and psychological needs of employees. In the process of food production, they should ensure the safety of employees in an all-round way, provide them with a comfortable working environment, regularly organize health check-ups, carry out occupational health and safety training in order to reduce safety accidents, occupational diseases and other health hazards of employees. They should give employees the same opportunity to
receive education and promotion, carry out regular or irregular vocational training for employees, improve their professional ability, so as to make them achieve self-improvement and mobilize the enthusiasm, which can not only stimulate their ability of independent innovation, but also ensure the quality of their work.

5.3 The environment
Food enterprises should improve the environment by reducing waste gas and waste water discharge, pollution control, environmental protection funds and other measures. Through the formulation of policies and measures to achieve energy conservation, consumption reduction and rational utilization of resources. Proper disposal of the waste generated in the production process to ensure pollutant discharge standards, control and reduce the energy consumption per unit of product. Food enterprises should develop and adopt cleaner production model. They also should comply with environmental protection laws and regulations.

Food enterprises need to improve energy efficiency, reduce pollution, reduce carbon emissions and strengthen waste disposal. Food enterprises should pay attention to the environment on which they locate, use renewable energy as much as possible, maintain ecological balance and biodiversity, pay attention to the restoration and governance of the environment, and achieve ecological sustainable development. The improvement degree and execution effectiveness of food enterprises in environmental management policies and systems have a direct impact on their contributions to energy conservation, emission reduction and ecological protection.

5.4 Fair operating practices and
Food companies need to actively undertake the social responsibility of industry chain partners, such as fair trade, settlement payment for goods in time, establish a benign interaction with industrial partners, ensure that products from the source to the sales process orderly operation, all of them, improve enterprise's market value. If the primary purchasers of agricultural products are responsible, they are often in a weak position in the transaction with food enterprises, which requires the food enterprises to take the initiative to assume the responsibility for the suppliers, ensure fair transaction and timely settlement of the payment for goods, so as to protect the rights and interests of the suppliers. Responsibility of food enterprises to downstream distributors from large supermarkets to small convenience stores. It is these thousands of distributors that build a bridge for the transaction between food enterprises and consumers. Food enterprises need to ensure timely delivery, pay attention to product quality, and do not bid up the supply price, so as to provide profit space for both parties.

In order to operate in a fair way, food enterprises should invite public bidding, create a level playing field and perform trading contracts as required. They also should ensure suppliers to supply raw materials according to the standard, provide technical guidance, establish the supplier evaluation system, provide stable demand, develop together, timely repayment, true and transparent financial information, in strict accordance with the terms of the loan contract to use funds.

5.5 Consumer issues
It is the fundamental requirement for food enterprises to meet the needs of consumers. Food enterprises should pay close attention to the psychology of consumers and take responsibility efficiently. For example, they should strictly check the quality of raw materials, provide safe and healthy food, timely launch of new products, establish food information trace-ability system and food recall mechanism, provide a complete after-sales service system, establish communication channels and effective handling of customer complaints. By providing real product information and so on, they can enhance consumers' confidence in food enterprises and comprehensively improve consumers' satisfaction, so as to expand food enterprises' market share and enhance their market value.

5.6 Community involvement and development
Food enterprises take an active part in community activities through donating to vulnerable groups, caring for the growth of young people and creating jobs for community residents. By absorbing the employment of community residents, they can promote community harmony and enhance community residents' happiness. Food enterprises can also establish volunteer organizations to enhance the
interaction with the community, so as to win the support and help of the community, which will expand the community market and enhance the value of enterprises.

6. CONCLUSION
The food industry chain is long and the supervision is difficult. Food safety problems may occur not only in the processing control link, but also in the source, storage logistics and other upstream and downstream links. The food problem involves agriculture, environment and other related industries. To promote food enterprises to fulfill their social responsibilities, it is necessary to start from the national level, from the perspective of the whole industrial chain, and give consideration to the control and cooperation of the whole supply chain.

At present, food safety has become a hot topic in the whole society. The implementation of corporate social responsibility is not only the ardent expectation of the masses, but also the urgent need for the development of enterprises. However, in the actual work, it is found that many food enterprises do not know where to start their social responsibility work, or they have already carried out relevant work but have not connected with the social responsibility issue due to their insufficient understanding of social responsibility work. Based on this, this paper puts forward some Suggestions on the implementation of social responsibility of food enterprises from ISO 26000 international social responsibility standard.

Food enterprises should fully pay attention to the expectations and needs of stakeholders. This includes respect human rights, safeguard employees' rights and interests, protect environment, pay attention to food safety, fair competition. Food enterprises actively fulfill their social responsibilities, which will improve the competitiveness of the entire food industry and achieve sustainable development.

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