

Study on consumer fear about radioactive contamination of food

Kazuya Fujimaki

Key Words: food, radioactive contamination, risk communication, questionnaire

1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

On March 11, 2011, the accident occurred in the first nuclear power plant of Tokyo Electric Power Company Fukushima in response to their influences of The Sendai earthquake. In the accident of the nuclear power plant, a radioactive material is spread in the atmosphere and we came to be anxious about radioactive contamination of food. In this situation, many organizations and individuals reacted and it sent information. However, the scientific term and definition relevant to radioactive materials were not used usually for many consumers. In this situation, it's hard for consumers to obtain reliable information and to find the food can be safe.

Among these circumstances, risk communication about radioactive contamination of food rather need to know the information needs of consumers than letting consumers uneasy by providing unilateral information to organizations. In this study, the subject is grasping reality of consumer concerns on the risk of radioactive contamination of food and action of avoiding risk that are a prerequisite for forming a desired risk communication.

2. METHODS

Based on the trend of the existing research, and the risk management, the risk assessment and risk communication which have been performed till the present, by this research, in order to clarify consumer fears, the questionnaire was carried out. 5994 questionnaires were sent through random sampling by targeting the Kanto and Kansai.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results of survey, found that action to avoid exposure to radiation more than 60% of people. In addition, approximately 40% of people avoid the food which produced in prefectures nearby accident site. They are related to "reputational damage" was the economic damage. However, approximately 40% of them are people who are trying to be individuals as much as possible avoid radiation expose. And these people are different in character from 30% people who simply avoid foods of specific region. Typical of these people are women and who have children below junior high school, and who was doing the daily cooking. The people who have children rely on the Internet and friends to collect information in activity and avoid the effects of radioactive materials. They want to know more pragmatic information to avoid the effects of radioactive materials than information of government's activity.

In the future, risk communication is needed to meet the information needs of people having anxiety due to a lack of information and paying a lot of cost. Focusing on mothers with children, while they activity collect information, there are situations that are not provided sufficient information such as avoid risk of radiation expose to have a need for each individual. There is a need to improve this point.

To that end, government agencies and professionals continue efforts to send easy-to-understand information such as how to avoid the impact of pollution and radioactive material situation actively. And they must create the situation that consumers can determine safety. However, in the radioactive material contamination, due to response to nuclear accident, trusts for information sources such as governments and media are capricious. So standing the position of consumers and children, they need to correspond the nuclear accidents that consumers can trust the information sources.