

New normal of food services post-lockdown

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The Coronavirus pandemic has caused a massive shift in consumer behaviour and has brought about changes to people's eating habit and food services that is likely to last far longer than any lockdown. People across the globe stay at home cooking their own meals, resulted in an increased demand for convenience products and prepared food. Restaurants have to safeguard themselves by diversifying their offerings through online and delivering services. This paradigm shift has posed great challenges for food industry worldwide.

Food producers need to be equipped to adapt to a new marketplace after the reopening. In the short term, social distancing rule still has to be in place and strict regulations for food preparation have to be displayed to boost credibility of the brand. Restaurants, especially from small and medium-sized enterprise, must be open to new way of doing businesses, learn to adapt to changes of the local demand, thrive to achieve competitive advantages in the market using different marketing tools such as online platform and up-to date communications. While retailers have to stock appropriate amount of food products in response to the rising trend of home-cooking and consumers' less frequent visit to the store.

In the longer term, food industry is likely to face very different consumer habits and priorities. With the predicted global economic downturn, there is no doubt that reduced purchasing power will be a challenge for many going forward.

Healthy eating and food safety will remain a top priority as people want to lead healthier lives and ensure they feed their families in a safe and health-promoting way. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has encouraged a strict personal hygiene for food preparation, for both households and food businesses, as follows:

- The use of different chopping boards and knives for raw meat and cooked food
- Handwashing between handling raw meat and cooked food
- Not to eat sick animals and animals that have died of diseases
- Even in areas experiencing outbreaks, meat products can be safely consumed if these items are cooked thoroughly and properly handled during food preparation

With recently conducted research, The Norwegian Food Safety Authority confirmed that the Coronavirus does not affect seafood safety. Fish and seafood products from Norway are not a carrier of the virus and pose no risk to consumers. Norwegian Salmon is documented as a safe and healthy food and can be consumed raw as sushi and sashimi, even without freezing. The farming of Norwegian Salmon follows strict regulations. In accordance with EU law, Norway annually monitors the content of various pharmaceuticals and environmental toxins in farmed fish. Norwegian Salmon is exclusively fed on heat-treated dry feed, which does not contain any viable parasites.

"In the week of 13 April, the total export of fresh Salmon to Asia increased with 12%. China which has lifting many restrictions had a growth in Norwegian Salmon import of 137% to 837 tons last week. Other markets with a positive trend are Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South-Korea, whereas markets like Singapore, Thailand and Japan have experienced a decrease in April," said Asbjorn Warvik Rortveit, Regional Director for South East Asia, Norwegian Seafood Council.

The Norwegian seafood industry has been providing safe, sustainable, and nutritious food before, during, and after the Coronavirus outbreak. Norway's world-class standard in handling the Coronavirus crisis in past few months has reassured both business partners and consumers with trust in Norwegian seafood worldwide.

The world after Coronavirus will not be the same. Everyone must be ready for the new normal in all aspects of life. It is a critical time for food business to be agile and evolve from the crisis by taking control and be responsible. As for the consumers, one's responsibility is to be selective and choose food products wisely at retail outlets with pre-packaging from a trustworthy brand and country-of-origin