MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY AND QUALITY OF STREET FOODS OF THE CITY BELÉM-PARÁ-BRAZIL.

Francisco C. A. do Nascimento, André A. C. das Chagas. School of Nutrition, Federal University of Pará, Street Augusto Correa 01, 66075 110 Belém, Pará, Brazil, mail: fcan@ufpa.br

Street vendors supply large amounts of food at accessible prices, particularly in developing countries. The sanitary quality of ready-to-eat foods can be a risk to the consumers health since people usually involved in this activity does not have proper knowledge in safe handling of foods. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the microbiological safety and quality of street foods sold in São Braz -Belém-Pará-Brazil. A total of 31 street food samples, were bought and analyzed. Standard method were used for the enumeration, isolation, and identification of *Escherichia coli* as well total coliforms in ready-to-eat foods: caruru, vatapa, tacaca and maniçoba. Among the 31 samples of caruru, vatapa, tacaca and maniçoba 13.34%, 6.66%, and 13.34% were found unsatisfactory for total coliforms, respectively, and 31% ready-to-eat foods samples were found unsatisfactory according to the *Escherichia coli* standard used. These results suggest that the hygiene practices of many food street-vending places are not adequate, resulting in a high proportion of read-to-eat foods with microbiological quality unsatisfactory for consumption. Street foods can be sources of enteropathogens and vendors should therefore receive education in food hygiene. Special attention should be given to the causes of diarrhoea, the transmission of diarrhoea pathogens, the handling of equipment and cooked food, hand-washing practices and environmental hygiene.