En route to the future - a decade of opportunites and challenges

1997 ♦ 2007

IN

Food Poisoning + GM Food

(*Genetically modified)

≠

Food safety

Title: Food Poisoning + GM Food ≠ Food Safety

By 3B Group 3

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Section 1

Introduction

What you are thinking are inside it.
Introduction

In recent ten years, the problem of food poisoning and genetically modified food has been concerned. In the recent five years, an average of about 800 food poisoning outbreaks affecting more than 3000 people occurred in Hong Kong each year. (Source: Centre for Food Safety) The trend of outbreak of food poisoning is increasing. Therefore, we are going to explore about the opportunities and challenges of food safety in Hong Kong in a decade - 1997 to 2007.

After increase in number of food poisoning cases, people now realize that healthy is very important. Besides, more and more genetically modified food has been sold in the supermarket which is not labeled. Most of the people are now frightful about food safety. Center for Food Safety (食物安全中心) was established by government on 2 May 2006 under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (食物環境衛生署). They ensure food safety by inspection, education, etc. Although many measures have been taken out by government to ensure the food safety, some of the people may still think the measures of government is not enough and effective. Is it true? That is what we want to explore and discuss.

In this project, we would like to talk about the incidents about food poisoning and genetically modified food in the past ten years, the trend, opportunities and challenges about these two aspects. Should we also take part in preventing food poisoning? Should we accept genetically modified food? We will talk about those questions in this project.
Section 2
Background Information

The truth you need to know.

2.1 – What is food poisoning?
2.2 – What is Genetically Modified (GM) Foods?
2.1 - What is food poisoning?

**Definition**

- It is any illness resulting from the consumption of food, which are not always caused by poisons.
- It occurs when a person ingests a contaminating chemical or a natural toxin.

**Characteristics**

- It is usually mild, but sometimes deadly illness.
- It usually arises from improper handling, preparation, or food storage.

**Causes**

- It is caused by a variety of foodborne pathogenic bacteria, viruses or parasites that contaminate food.
- It may caused by the presence of pesticides or medicines in food; or,
- E.g. consuming naturally toxic substances like poisonous mushrooms or reef fish.

**Common bacteria and viruses**

- *Escherichia* (大腸桿菌)
- *Salmonella* (沙門氏菌)
- *Bacillus cereus* (蠟樣芽孢桿菌)
- *Streptococcus* (鏈球菌)
2.2 - What is Genetically Modified (GM) Foods?

**Definition**

- They are foods produced from genetically modified organisms (GMO) that have had their DNA altered through genetic engineering.
- The first commercially grown genetically modified whole food crop was the Flavr Savr tomato, which was made more resistant to rotting by Californian Company Calgene.

**History**

- GM foods were first put on the market in the early 1990s.
- The most common modified foods are derived from plants: soybean, corn, canola, cotton seed oil and wheat.

**Producing Process**

- Taking DNA from one organism
- Modifying it in a laboratory
- Inserting it into the target organism’s genome
- Producing new and useful traits.
Section 3
Timeline - A Review in history

Secrets reveal, wonderful facts you ought to know.
In May 1997, 13 local cases of cholera were notified. Prompt control measures, including step-up of inspection and enforcement action on all food premises, hawker control and pest control, were implemented.

Cholera (霍亂) made an early appearance and hit Hong Kong in February through contaminated imported cockles. Further cases were notified in summer.

A new measure was introduced during the year for the prevention of *ciguatera* fish poisoning. Importers now send samples of coral reef fish from new fishing grounds to the Government for ciguatoxin testing before actually purchasing the fish. This helped to reduce the risk of importing toxic fish.

Under the food surveillance programme, 59,991 samples were taken in 2000 for chemical, microbiological and/or radiological testing to ensure that consumers were not exposed to contaminants in food that might pose a health risk.

The Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations amended in February 1996 have largely come into effect. This has strengthened consumer protection and made local regulations more consistent with international developments.

Food Business Regulation of Section 30 of the Restriction on the sale, etc. of articles specified in Schedule 2

The last outstanding part of the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) (Amendment) Regulation 1996 came into force on June 1 1999.

Through the promotion of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)-based food safety plan.
During the year, 75,353 and 15,923 vehicles carrying vegetables and poultry were inspected at the Man Kam To Food Control Office and 85,318 pig urine samples were taken for testing for beta-agonists, including clenbuterol and salbutamol, which were recorded as being used illegally as an agent to promote lean meat in food animals and, through their residue in animal offal, might cause food poisoning.

2002-07-17
3 People included 2 women and 1 man from the mainland were food poisoned by eating some smelly crab in a banquet in Quarry Way.

2003-11-20
There were 13 men and 28 women had joined a tour on 16-11 and they have been done to at Chinese restaurant in Lau Fau Shan. After that the Department of Health have tested that there are Vibrio parahaemolyticus(副溶血弧菌)inside those seafood.

2004-07-08
There was a very case happened in Hong Kong. 39 people including some kindergarten students were food poisoned by the dinner buffet at the Regal Riverside Hotel. After an investigation, the HD has found that it was the Vibrio parahaemolyticus in the seafood.

Part V (Food and Drugs) of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) of Section 59 of the Examination and seizure and marking or destruction of food

Food Business Regulation of Section 15 of the Cleanliness and repair of food rooms

Food Business Regulation of Section 15 of the Cleanliness and repair of food rooms

Food Business Regulation of Section 15 of the Cleanliness and repair of food rooms
On 2005-8, Hong Kong had found that the freshwater fish imported from the mainland and Taiwan contain Malachite green.

2006-11-21
The HD have examined that there were Sudan from the eggs imported from the mainland.

2007-02-22
8 people were sick after eating a pan of food in Wong Tai Sin, Kwai Chong and Kung Tong’s fast food shop but they were not in the same group of office.

2005
Food Business Regulation of Section 15 of the Cleanliness and repair of food rooms

2006
Part V (Food and Drugs) of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) of Section 68 of the Power to examine food in course of transit, etc.

2007
Food Business Regulation of Section 15 of the Cleanliness and repair of food rooms
Section 4
Research Findings – Questionnaire

Can you beat the test??

4.1 – Results of the data
4.2 – Analysis of the survey
4.3 – Unexpected result of the survey
We have interviewed 80 people in general public. We led the interviewees to fill the information on the questionnaire with our explanation besides.

Here is the sample of our questionnaire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire-Food poisoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**A. Personal information:**
- Sex: □ M  □ F
- Age: □ 11-18  □ 19-24  □ 25-60  □ over 60
- Education Level: □ Primary  □ Secondary  □ University or above

**B. Opinion:**
1. Identify the following situations if it leads to food poisoning:
   - a. eaten cross-contaminated food from buffet dinner  Yes /No
   - b. eaten unsterilized ice cream  Yes /No
   - c. eaten pesticidal vegetables  Yes /No
   - d. drunk broken can of juice  Yes /No
   - e. eaten use-by package food  Yes /No

2. Are you worried about HK’s food safety?
   □ Yes  □ No

3. If yes, why are you worried?
   □ Lack of governmental surveillance
   □ Lack of confidence
   □ Others: ________________________________

4. What do you think the most serious event is in recent 10 years?  _______________________________

5. In recent 10 years, have you/ your family had food poisoning?
   □ Yes  (Types:______________________)  □ No

6. Do you think the measure taken by the government is efficient?
   □ Yes  □ No (Why? ________________)

7. What do you suggest the government should do to solve the problem of food safety? (You may tick more than once)
   □ Enhance examination  □ Regular inspection
   □ Reinforce education  □ Stricter laws
   □ Regional cooperation  □ Others:__________________

Thank you!!
4.1 - Results of the data

1) Identify the following situations if it leads to food poisoning:
   a. eaten cross-contaminated food from buffet dinner  Yes / No
   b. eaten unsterilized ice cream  Yes / No
   c. eaten pesticidal vegetables  Yes / No
   d. drunk broken can of juice  Yes / No
   e. eaten expired package food  Yes / No

Aim: To test for public's knowledge about food poisoning.

Hypothesis: Public knows well about food poisoning.

Result:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.1(a)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.1(b)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.1(c)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.1(d)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.1(e)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart:

Conclusions:

- Indeed, the reference answers should be all correct. Public's knowledge about food poisoning is overall passed.
- From Question 1a, we can see that public has a right concept about the safety in buffet dinner.
- From Question 1b, public knows well about the safety in cold storage.
- From Question 1c, however, little part of the public thinks that eating pesticidal vegetables is not count as food poisoning. There will be a great impact on our health if pesticidal (農藥) vegetables are eaten.
- From Question 1d, public has a right concept about the safety in package drinks.
- From Question 1e, public knows well about the safety in package food.

Comments:

The result is matched with our hypothesis. Although the good results is shown generally, part of the public is suggested to improve on the safety about food poisoning.
2) Are you worried about HK’s food safety?
   □ Yes □ No

Aim: To investigate the concern and standpoint of general public in HK’s food safety.

Hypothesis: Public is concerned a lot in HK’s food safety.

Result: Chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions:

70% of the public is worried and concerned at HK’s food safety.

However, 30% of the public does not care for HK’s food safety.

Comments:

This is an unexpected result with our hypothesis. 30% of the public does not care for the food safety which may cause a serious trouble in HK. If we exaggerate to the population in HK, it means 210,000 people. Public should raise their concern at HK’s food safety.

But why those 70% of the public worried about HK’s food safety?

(Re: See Question 3)
3) If yes, why are you worried?
   □ Lack of governmental surveillance
   □ Lack of confidence
   □ Others: ____________________________

Aim: To study the reason why public is concerned about HK’s food safety.

Hypothesis: The reasons are lack of governmental surveillance and confidence.

Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Q.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of governmental</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surveillance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart:

Conclusions:
- Half of the interviewees, who are worried of HK’s food safety, are lack of governmental surveillance and confidence.
- For others, they mainly say that there have been many food poisoning cases reported in recent years, i.e. no quality control

Comments:
We think that this matches our hypothesis. For those said others, cases reported made them loss the confidence, which is another similar reason in our hypothesis.
4) What do you think the most serious event is in recent 10 years?

Aim: To know the most serious event in recent 10 years in public's view.

Hypothesis: The events form the food contains artificial additive from mainland, for example, Malachite Green (孔雀石綠) and Sudan Red (蘇丹紅).

Results:

Regal Hotel (麗豪酒店) incident 24
Malachite Green (孔雀石綠) 20
Mad cow disease 4
Others 20
Don't know 12

Conclusions:

- 30% interviewees say that the buffet dinner in Regal Hotel (麗豪酒店) is the most serious food poisoning event in recent 10 years.
- 25% interviewees think that Malachite Green is a serious event.
- 5% of interviewees think of mad cow disease.
- In others, most interviewees says out the names of seafood.

Comments:

- The public replying the answer as Regal Hotel Incident really surprises us. Eating cross-contaminated food from buffet dinner has the deepest image in public, where similar situation is mentioned in Question 1a.
- And, there is also a large share saying about seafood which reflects the easiest way to have food poisoning is from seafood.
5) In recent 10 years, have you/ your family had food poisoning? □ Yes (Types: ________________) □ No

Aim: To know how often the public has food poisoning and the types if there is.

Hypothesis: 75% of the public never have food poisoning.

Results:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.5</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastroenteritis</td>
<td>others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(腸胃炎)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart:

Conclusions:
- 85% of the public never have food poisoning.
- 15% have had food poisoning, where 3% of specific bacteria and 10% of gastroenteritis (腸胃炎).

Comments:
The result shows better than the hypothesis. NOT many cases of food poisoning are happened.
6) Do you think the measure taken by the government is effective?
   □ Yes       □ No (Why? _________________________)

Aim: To investigate the public's opinion and standpoint on government's measure.

Hypothesis: The public generally satisfy the effectiveness of the measure taken by the government.

Results:
   Q.6  
   Yes 66  
   No 14

Chart:

Conclusions:
   82% of the public generally satisfy the effectiveness of the measure taken by the government.
   For others, they don't satisfy because the efficiency as the time from draft to execution is too long.
   Another reason is too passive. They think she takes action after reported cases.

Comments:
   From conclusion, the government needs to improve although she is doing well now. The government should face and avoid the problem at once or it's too late.
   For other suggestions, refer to Question 7.
7) What do you suggest the government should do to solve the problem of food safety? (You may tick more than once)
   □ Enhance examination  □ Regular inspection
   □ Reinforce education  □ Stricter laws
   □ Regional cooperation □ Others: _______________________

Aim: To find out the best way to solve the problem of food safety from public's opinion.

Hypothesis: Stricter laws is the best way to solve the problem.

Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q.7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional cooperation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stricter laws</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce education</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular inspection</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance examination</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional cooperation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stricter laws</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce education</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular inspection</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance examination</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions:

- From public's opinion, enhance examination is the best way to solve the problem.
- And, the second best way is to stricter laws.
- General public thinks that there is a little help with regional cooperation.

Comments:

- There is a little difference between the hypothesis and the results. In fact, which stricter laws is the second best way to solve the problem. Whether it is the best way or not, it is useful by increasing fines and penalties.
- Yet the public thinks so, we don't disagree with them. Though it is not the best way, it is still a special function in whole system.
4.2 - Analysis of the survey

- Public knows well about the food safety and having a right concept in food safety.

- A majority of the public worry about HK’s food safety. Due to many food poisoning cases are reported, people lose confidence to the government.

- These cases are mainly about the buffet dinner in hotels, which are unforgettable to the public.

- Other than buffet incidents, artificial additive is another major case.

- NOT many of food poisoning cases are happened in HK.

- The measure taken by the government is effective but not efficient enough. The execution time is too long.

- The government should enhance examination and stricter laws in order to solve the problem of food safety.

4.3 - Unexpected result of the survey

- Many citizens do not care about HK’s food safety.
- The public replying the answer as Regal Hotel Incident really surprises us.
- Before the survey, we think the public concerned a lot in HK’s food safety, because food safety is directly related to our health. However, the result turned out is out of our expectation, only 70% of the public is worried and concerned in HK’s food safety. Why some citizens do not care about HK’s food safety??
Section 5
Analysis and Discussion

Let the ORIGINAL opinions talk to you.

5.1 – Trend of development
5.2 – Possible opportunities and challenges
   5.21 – Food poisoning
   5.22 – Genetically Modified Food
5.1 - Trend of development

(1) Food poisoning

The trend for food poisoning outbreak is increasing in recent years. However, it decreases a lot in 2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total person affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>4147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Food and Environmental Hygiene Department)

(2) Genetically Modified Food

The GM crops are increasing in multiple. In 1996, there are only 2 millions hectares of GM crops. However, in 1997, the GM crops had been increased to 11 million hectares.
In 1998, there were over 27 million hectares of GM crops
It is believed that the number of the GM crops will remain increasing

(Source: 英國民間信息傳播機構 Panos，1999)
5.2 - Possible opportunities and challenges

Food poisoning has already happened in past years, while Genetically Modified Food is a topic started in recent years. They both are about food but they will have different opportunities and challenges. Let’s see how we should face them.

5.2.1 - Food poisoning

Opportunities

- Cases of food poisoning can encourage the government to concern about food safety and thus carrying out appropriate (適當的) measures.

- Measures taken by the government, such as regular inspection, can reduce the chance of take-in poisonous food

- Awareness of food safety of people is raised by cases of food poisoning, publication and education by government, thus people will avoid to eat unclean food, and living quality of them can be enhanced

Challenges

- Not much food processing factories have adopted Food Safety Plan (食物安全計劃) as their food safety management systems.
  (Source: Centre for Food Safety)

- Prevention of food poisoning of owners/managers of food businesses is passive.
What should HK do to face the opportunities and challenges?

☑ Owners/managers of food businesses must understand their responsibility of ensuring food safety. They must have full commitment and enthusiasm in order to successfully implement Food Safety Plan in their premises.

☑ The Government should take part in the partnership with the industry by providing training opportunities to the trade so that owners/managers have a clear understanding on the principles, applications and benefits of Food Safety Plan, for example, encouraging them to reduce use of pesticide (農藥) on their selling vegetables so that customers will be more willing to buy their vegetables, thus increasing benefits.

☑ Also, highly encourage management of food premises and citizens should always be vigilant (警惕) about the environmental, personal and food hygiene.

A) Environmental Hygiene:
The hardware (設備) of food premises should be always maintained at good conditions. Cleaning, sanitizing (消毒) and maintenance of food premises, equipments and utensils should be made in accordance with the licensing (許可) conditions.

B) Personal Hygiene:
Food handlers should abstain (避免) from duty if they are sick. Proper hand washing can effectively prevent food borne illnesses, especially before preparing food and after going to toilet.

C) Food Hygiene:
Bacteria grow quickly at temperature of 4-60°C. Therefore, good temperature and time control effectively minimize the risk of food poisoning outbreaks in food premises.
5.22 - Genetically Modified Food

**Opportunities**

- Increase crop yields
- Increase the tolerance of crops to adverse growing conditions, e.g. drought
- Improve the nutrient composition of crops, e.g. increase the protein content of rice
- Provide resistance to crop pests and reduce the use of pesticides
- Improve sensory attributes of food, e.g. flavour, texture
- Improve processing characteristics so as to reduce wastage and costs
- Eliminate allergy-causing properties in some foods
- Issue guidelines for voluntary labeling (自願性標籤指引) for trade reference to guarantee food safety

**Challenges**

- Unintended modification of similar species in the neighbouring fields due to cross pollination
- Disturbing the balance of ecosystems
- Development of super pests
- Whether it is acceptable to move genes between plants or animals which do not normally interbreed
- Some people may worry about eating a food containing a gene from something they would not eat for religious, health or other reasons
- Greenpeace (綠色和平) investigated over 800 pre-packaged food items and found none of them labeled as recommended by the HKSAR Government’s Voluntary Labeling System for GE Foods. Implemented since 2006, the voluntary labeling system proves to be a complete failure as manufacturers and distributors are not obligated to provide the GE information.
What should HK do to face the opportunities and challenges?

☑ Hong Kong does not have any commercial production of GM crops or livestock to date. Local scientists should conduct field trials.

☑ Strengthen research about biotechnology

☑ Guarantee food safety and safeguard the consumer rights by establishing a well defined and restrictive mandatory labelling system(強制性標籤) for GM foods.
Section 6
Limitation and Improvement

"We are not good enough, we need improvement."
Limitation and Improvement

✧ Limitation of time
We have only interviewed 80 people. Frankly, the youth do the survey mostly, many adults turned us away. As a result, our opinions mainly come from the youth in Shatin. Do a better time management can increase the accuracy of the survey.

✧ Information are too “old”
When we were doing the timeline, it was an easy work to find out news about food poisoning cases in recent 5 years, but not the 1997-2002’s. We can only get little information from the “Hong Kong Annual Report”, which is not comprehensive. Try to use different channels to get more details.

✧ Careless in Questionnaire
We only ask about the question of food poisoning, but not any about the GM food. If we could ask for the opinion for GM food, we could know more about the effect of GF food in Hong Kong. Be more careful in everything next time.

✧ Doing too wide
We have done 2 aspects for our project food safety- GM food and food poisoning. It may be better for us to do 1 aspect only so that we can concentrate and thus analyzing more data, opportunities and challenges for that aspect.
Section 7
Feelings

“We do our best, the best of the best.”
Feeling after this project

- Deciding the title
Before we get started, we had to decide the title. At first we thought it was the most difficult project from F.1. But we cross the bridge when you come to it, finally the title was set perfectly.

- English difficulty
The difference in this project and the years before is using English as the major language. But with our team spirit, we came over lastly.

- Work division
We had to think which kind of work is suitable for which group mate, such as analysis of the information on the questionnaire. We were quite smart that we feel free to ask our teacher—Mr. See for guidance when we had any questions. And we were glad that he was patient to answer all the questions.

- Knowing more about our classmates
There was a large contrast in attitude. While some of us paying tough effort in this project, the others don’t care about it. We, truly, knew more about their personality and their attitude on working. This project is a good proof to show students attitude.

- Knowledge on ourselves
By investigating in food poisoning, we knew more about public’s opinions to government. On the other hand, on ourselves, we learnt how to prevent to get sick. Other than that, we learnt to watch a thing through many viewpoints thoroughly.
Section 8
Appendix

"Thank you very much."

8.1 – Acknowledgement
8.2 – Reference list
8.1 - Acknowledgement

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following people who have helped us a lot during the research:

- Mr. Tsang
- Mr. See
- Miss Cheung
- Students, teachers and citizens interviewed

Thank you for providing valuable opinions and computer skills!

8.2 - Reference list

Websites:

- http://en.wikipedia.org (維基百科)
- http://www.yearbook.gov.hk (香港年報)
- http://greenpeace.mysinablog.com
- www.appledaily.com (蘋果日報)
The whole group of students is co-operative and work under schedule. The content is quite good and match the topic.

The use of timeline to show the food poisoning events and the setting of laws is a good approach to show the relationship between the two things.

However, the setting of questionnaire is a little bit careless because they ask only about food poisoning but not any about the GM food.

Secondly, they have done two aspects for food-safety - GM food and food poisoning. This makes their aim is too ambitious. If they could focus on only one aspect, it will be better.

The report is systematic and shows their effort in finding the raw materials.

Overall Grade for Report: A-