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The role of media reporting in food safety governance in China: a dairy case study

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## 1 Abstract

2 Using dairy products as the case study of interest, the aim of the research is to explore the role  
3 of the media in food safety governance in China. Thematic content analysis is used to  
4 evaluate government and media reports (n = 233) on dairy related food safety incidents in  
5 China between 2004 and 2017 with differences identified between government and media  
6 reporting. The data is extracted from an online database (Zhichuchuangwai). The **results show**  
7 **that the** government performs better on exposing incidents earlier within the 14-year period  
8 but the news media plays a complementary role in food safety governance exposing a wider  
9 coverage of incidents. This study extends the current literature on the role of the news media  
10 in food safety governance in China by focusing on a single food sector (dairy), but on a  
11 national scale.

12 **Keywords** food safety, disclosure, media, governance,

## 13 Highlights

- 14 • Food safety governance in China shows emergent hybrid characteristics.
- 15 • Media communication has an important and complementary role in food safety  
16 governance.
- 17 • Media only reported dairy product incidents tended to focus on those identified in the  
18 home.

## 20 1. Introduction

21 Recurrent food safety incidents in China have exerted a profound negative impact on  
22 consumer confidence and the wider international reputation of **the** Chinese food industry (Jia  
23 & Jukes, 2013; Peng, Li, Xia, Qi & Li, 2015; Liu & Ma, 2016). Since the 1990s, China has  
24 experienced both rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, causing great change in the food

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