THROW IT OUT THE WINDOW! (B7FA9716)

TRACKING FOOD SAFETY ISSUES IN CHINA.

Project URL: zccw.info/report

- Health
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Throw it Out the Window! is a website built by Wu Heng - a Fudan University graduate - that tracks food scandals in China. The site makes use of an intimidatingly large database put together by Mr. Wu, that tracks media reports of food safety issues since 2004. By 2013, Mr. Wu had brought together more than 3,000 reports highlighting food safety issues.

Throw it Out the Window! does not just allow individuals to get real-time information about food safety. It also encourages people to make their own reports, almost as a citizen food safety inspectorate.

As important as the site is for bringing the issue out into the open for public debate, Throw it Out the Window! is just one small sign of how the web is enabling a new kind of citizen activism in China. The site is not overly political, yet it does promote and inform a growing debate over government policy towards food safety, and the enforcement of regulation.

Wu told the China Daily that he started the site after reading about a scandal involving beef, which he enjoys eating. He told the newspaper: “Once I was like a frog in warm water who did not care much about repeated food safety scandals, believing that the tainted food was an issue far away from my own life [...] You should never be indifferent about the misery of others, for maybe you are the next one who will suffer.”

Unrest over food safety has been growing in China over the last few years, following a report from the Asian Development Bank, which called for urgent reforms to strengthen and streamline inter-agency coordination, and enact an overarching “basic food law”. Two-thirds of respondents to the 2007 poll conducted by the State Food and Drug Administration, said that they were concerned by food safety. Mr. Wu’s site is just one sign of a more active and engaged citizenship emerging in China through the web.

Image 'meat and fish in Causeway Bay' courtesy of Aldas Kirvaitis

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