

# Foodborne Parasites: Emerging Threats and Control Strategies.

Laura Gómez\*

Institute of Parasitic Diseases, University of São Paulo, Brazil

## Abstract

**Foodborne parasites pose a significant threat to global health, with millions affected annually. Organisms like *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Taenia solium*, and *Cryptosporidium* spp. are transmitted through contaminated food and water, causing severe morbidity and economic losses. This rapid communication highlights recent developments in the detection, control, and prevention of foodborne parasitic infections, emphasizing their growing importance in a globalized food supply chain.**

## Introduction

Foodborne parasitic infections remain underrecognized despite their substantial public health burden. These parasites, transmitted via undercooked meat, contaminated produce, or unsafe water, cause diverse illnesses ranging from gastrointestinal distress to severe systemic complications. Increasing global trade, urbanization, and climate change exacerbate their impact, underscoring the need for heightened surveillance and innovative control measures.

## Recent Advances in Foodborne Parasite Research

### Improved Diagnostic Tools

Molecular techniques, including quantitative PCR and next-generation sequencing, have enhanced the sensitivity and specificity of parasite detection in food and water samples. Loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) assays are also emerging as cost-effective and rapid diagnostic tools, particularly in resource-limited settings.

### Understanding Transmission Dynamics

Advances in genomic studies have clarified transmission pathways of key parasites. For instance, population genomic studies of *Toxoplasma gondii* have identified clonal lineages associated with severe disease in humans, providing insights into risk factors linked to consumption of contaminated meat or water.

### Emerging Parasites in Globalized Food Systems

The globalization of food supply chains has facilitated the emergence of parasites like *Cyclospora cayetanensis*, often linked to imported fresh produce. Recent outbreaks have highlighted the need for stringent food safety measures, including source tracking and contamination prevention.

### Control Strategies in Livestock and Agriculture

Improved farming practices, such as controlled feeding, water sanitation, and antiparasitic treatment in livestock, have reduced the prevalence of zoonotic parasites like *Taenia solium* and *Trichinella spiralis*. Innovations in food processing,

including high-pressure processing and irradiation, have also proven effective in inactivating parasites in food products.

## Challenges and Future Directions

### Climate Change and Parasite Survival

Climate-driven changes in temperature, humidity, and rainfall patterns influence the survival and spread of foodborne parasites. Predictive models integrating climatic data are essential for anticipating shifts in parasite distribution and implementing preventive measures.

### Balancing Food Safety and Sustainability

Ensuring food safety while promoting sustainable agricultural practices remains a significant challenge. Strategies such as organic farming must integrate parasite risk management to prevent contamination of produce.

### Global Collaboration for Surveillance

Enhanced international collaboration is crucial for monitoring foodborne parasite outbreaks. Initiatives like the FAO/WHO/World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) collaboration on foodborne zoonotic parasites provide frameworks for coordinated action and data sharing.

## Conclusion

Foodborne parasites are a critical yet often overlooked aspect of food safety. Advances in diagnostics, control measures, and understanding of transmission dynamics offer hope for improved management. However, addressing emerging challenges requires sustained investment in research, robust food safety regulations, and global collaboration to ensure a safe and secure food supply.

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\*Correspondence to: Institute of Parasitic Diseases, University of São Paulo, Brazil, E-mail: lauragomez.parasitology@gmail.com

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