IBM, Mars collaborate to figure out what makes food safe

Is your food safe?

Protecting the global food supply is a monumental public health challenge. In the U.S. alone, one in six people are affected by food-borne diseases each year, resulting in 128,000 hospitalizations, 3,000 deaths and $9 billion in medical costs. Another $75 billion worth of contaminated food is recalled and discarded annually.

To promote food safety, scientists from IBM Research and Mars, Incorporated established the Sequencing the Food Supply Chain Consortium, a collaborative food safety platform that will take advantage of advances in genomics to further our understanding of what makes food safe.

As the food supply chain becomes more global and complex, new, innovative approaches that use genetic data to better understand and improve food safety are emerging, holding the promise of unparalleled insight and understanding of the total supply chain. In support of this goal, the consortium will conduct the largest-ever metagenomics study to categorize and understand micro-organisms and the factors that influence their activity in a normal, safe factory environment. This work could be extended into the larger context of the food supply chain — from farm to fork — and lead to new insights into how microorganisms interact within a factory ecology and be better controlled by new data and science-driven practices.

Read full, original article: Sequencing The Food Supply Chain: How A New Consortium Will Improve Food Safety