

《全国食品安全整顿700多人被判刑》

周四，最高法院表示在全国食品安全运动中共有700多人被判刑，其中并无政府官员。

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BEIJING - More than 700 people have been sentenced amid a nationwide food safety campaign, the top court said on Thursday, but none of them were officials.

Experts said the new Criminal Law - which subjects officials to criminal penalties if they turn a blind eye to the production and distribution of unsafe food - still needs time to be implemented.

An unclear division of responsibility among agencies also makes it hard to identify crimes for officials.

Of the 726 people sent to jail since 2008 for producing and selling tainted food, the highest penalty was a death sentence with a two-year reprieve, Sun Jungong, spokesman for the Supreme People's Court, said on Thursday at a news briefing.

The court, nevertheless, has filed no cases against food safety watchdogs and other officials responsible for supervising food safety for duty dereliction, said Pei Xianding, president of the No 2 Criminal Tribunal of the Supreme People's Court.

"As far as I know, courts of all levels across the country have received no lawsuits against officials flouting the law. It may be because the amendment was just enacted for half a year and the police officers are still investigating such cases," Pei explained.

Dai Peng, a professor at the Chinese People's Public Security University's detection department, said the chain of producing and selling tainted food is long and complicated, comprised of many government departments whose supervising responsibilities are not clearly defined, which could lead to difficulty in identifying crimes by officials.

Local industry and commerce administrations are responsible for imposing fines on tainted food producers, while the health bureaus are responsible for those who sell substandard food, so it is difficult to distinguish which department is the prime culprit, he said.

Xiong Wenzhao, a law professor with Minzu University of China, said not all the officials being accused of neglect of duty should face criminal punishment.

"For instance, bad consequences caused by administrative lethargy will lead to administrative penalties for the officials," he said, "but other serious dereliction of duty, such as corruption or misconduct that directly causes adverse consequences, will definitely lead to criminal charges."

He said recent notorious food scandals have sent a few officials to jail, but not many. He also appealed for more detailed punishments involving food safety issues.

Qiu Bo contributed to this story.

