

Title Food irradiation in the news: The cultural clash of a postharvest technology
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Abstract

Food irradiation has been a commercially viable postharvest technology for nearly 50 years (the actual idea of using ionizing radiation to extend the shelf-life of foods is over a century old), yet it has been used only occasionally and sporadically. Interviews with reporters and the sources they used at a Louisiana newspaper and a Florida newspaper uncovered three cultural spheres present in the debate over this post harvest technology – food, science/technology, and journalism. Each of these spheres were points of contention for reporters and sources, and this has had an affect on the adoption of the technology among those involved in the food industry. Interviews with both reporters and the individuals they relied on as sources elucidate how different issues encompassed within different cultural spheres have been linked to this post harvest technology, and have been used to help shape this debate. These cultural spheres offer various groups power to control relations with reporters, though that power can be usurped by others, including the reporters themselves. Interviews with reporters and their sources may help us understand how the values attached to cultural spheres are mobilized by various groups to make sense of a controversial topic, and how those groups gain entrance to public arenas and are then able to maintain their presence.