PROGRESS REPORT (January 2021)

WP5: Confidence building and trade facilitation

BACKGROUND

WP5 aims at building confidence in EU-China trade by improved understanding of consumer practices and regulatory frameworks, the latter by developing and demonstrating mutual recognition of laboratory standards and results.

OBJECTIVES

- To build Consumer Confidence through i) the identification of communication needs; ii) the identification of EU and Chinese consumers to selected food products in terms of food authenticity, integrity and traceability; iii) the development of effective risk/benefit communication approaches, confidence building strategies and risk mitigation tools; and iv) the evaluation risk/benefit communication strategies.
- To analyse trade barriers through: i) the review of disruptions in the flow of food products between the EU and China; ii) the engagement of key industry and government stakeholders; iii) the review of global legislation and the scale of challenge in reaching the harmonisation of food safety standards; and iv) a standard approach for identification and mitigation of food trade impediments related to food safety measures / standards.
- To develop an EU-China Laboratory Network and to plan contingency response and economic impact analysis following a food incident through: i) knowledge transfer (two ways) between laboratories; ii) the harmonisation of laboratory procedures and mutual recognition of results; iii) the development of consistent laboratory testing regimes and food safety standards; iv) the establishment of virtual laboratory (RL2020); v) past incidents case studies; and vi) the planning of scenario planning for future food incidents - response to a crisis – laboratory analysis, communication and estimating economic impact.

PROGRESS ACHIEVED SO FAR

- The work QUB completed in Deliverable 5.1 has been prepared for publication. QUB are continuing work on Task 5.2 - Analysis of trade barriers. Data on causes of rejections and recall incidents associated with commodities traded between EU and China were analysed. Chinese peanuts were identified as the main crop rejected at the EU border due to aflatoxin B_1, while it was found Chinese rejection of EU foods were mainly caused by incompliant quality of dairy products. There has been engagement with key industry and government stakeholders to identify trade impediments associated with divergant safety standards. This indicated improved traceability for EU baby milk might become more important for future sales of this product in China.
- CFSA in China has completed two consumer surveys, to examine Chinese consumer perceptions, trust and purchase intentions towards food products made in China and EU. The first (N>7000) found the majority of respondents (>90%) believe that natural raw food is safer than food produced and processed by the modern food industry, and 70% considered home made food safest. The second (N>3000) explored the finding from a previous survey that consumers were more concerned about chemicals in food than microbial contamination. It identified that the public and professionals view risk differently, trust in stakeholders is an important factor in determining how the public perceive risks and how receptive they are to messages.
- A system of food risk communication strategies was developed in China, and a manuscript is ready to submit to a journal. The effect of new communication strategies was also evaluated. An experiment to compare two communication strategies was completed and one manuscript has been published a second is being prepared for submission.
- The virtual lab, RL2020, continues to progress. Details of methods and regulations that are used for food control have been exchanged and been compiled by Fera in a shared area with support from VSCHT. The number of topic areas has been expanded to include authenticity of wines and herbs & spices, veterinary medicines and food contact materials, and these are starting to be populated by partners. A summary of competency and capacity among project participants has been prepared and is updated. Validation studies for the analysis of dioxins in food using GC-MS/MS in Fera, CFSA and CDC concluded successfully

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demonstrating good instrument performance. The results of the validation were presented in Deliverable 5.2 as well as in a webinar and a video.

- Work on to examine the economic impact of food incidents using the dioxins in Irish meat incident and melamine in Chinese infant formula as case studies was reported in Deliverable 5.2. There was good collaboration and data supplied by CFSA and other colleagues in China. Planning for scenarios for future exercises has started. The first will be a veterinary medicine type incident using nitrofurans as an example (related to the method development work by Teagasc in WP4). This will also include an economic analysis of the impact a virtual lab could have on such an incident. The second will be on sustainable food contact materials, to link with work in WP4. Partners invloved include Fera, QUB, VSCHT and CFSA.

SUCCESS STORY COMING SOON

- The analysis of consumer attitudes and barriers to trade arising from food safety incidents will enable action to be taken to reassure the consumer and to identify actions that may remove barriers to trade. Two online consumer surveys are currently in progress and recommendations for better consumer communication are being formulated. An online survey to test the efficacy and feasibility of a communication strategy (traceability information with an authenticity assurance) for its impact to enhance consumer trust in Chinese garlic will take place in the UK and Germany. A second online survey has been drafted to compare the efficacy and feasibility of two communication strategies for their impact to enhance Chinese consumer trust in EU baby milk and will commence online in April 2021.
- A critical review of global legislation on aflatoxins in penauts has been undertaken and drafted, and a white paper on effective approaches for early identification and proactive mitigation of aflatoxins in peanuts has also been written.
- The virtual laboratory RL2020 will assist within the field of harmonising food control in terms of analytical response and knowledge. The content in the RL2020 will be contunually added to. The dioxins method validation webinar is available in the RL2020 database as a training resource. RL2020 will support harmonisation, and sharing of information and methods.
- The economic analysis of the case studies of the past incidents, will move forward the understanding of the full economic cost of food safety incidents. Lessons learned on modelling the economic impact of incidents will be applied to the planned scenarios on nitrofurans and sustainable food contact materials, this will allow assessment of how a virtual lab and traceability can reduce the cost and impact of incidents in the future.

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