

PROGRESS REPORT (June 2019)

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, expectations, perceived barriers and facilitators; ii) the identification of EU and Chinese consumer expectations, attitudes and preferences with regard 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 for enhancing consumer confidence.
- To analyse trade barriers through: i) the review of current cases of border rejections and disruptions in the flow of food products between the EU and China; ii) the engagement of key industry and government stakeholders and the identification of areas of highest concern for trade impediments associated with divergent food safety standards; iii) the review of global legislation and the scale of challenge in reaching the harmonisation of food safety standards; and iv) the development of a standard approach for early identification and mitigation of food trade impediments related to a discrepancy in 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) of existing best practice between laboratories; ii) the harmonisation of laboratory procedures and the building of confidence and mutual recognition of results; iii) the development of consistent laboratory testing regimes and food safety standards; underpinned by robust risk assessment; iv) the establishment of virtual laboratory (RL2020); v) the use of past incidents as case studies to show how an integrated EU-China network could have improved the response to a crisis; 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

- Communication needs, expectations, perceived barriers and facilitators to building trust and confidence, and on consumer views have been analysed both within Europe and in China. An analysis of food trade impediments between the EU and China (stemming from different food safety standards) has identified two commodities of interest (peanuts and infant formula milk) and plans are underway to engage with key industry and government stakeholders.
- Work relating to the establishment of the virtual lab, RL2020, is progressing well, with methods for file transfer and storage established. Details of methods and regulations that are used for food control have been exchanged and validation studies have commenced for the analysis of dioxins in food using GC-MS/MS.
- Work on case studies to examine the economic impact of food incidents is underway, and planning for scenarios to use for future exercises will commence in summer 2019. These scenarios will cover topics that reach across several workpackages, e.g new issues relating to authenticity of wine.

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.
- Areas where a harmonised approach to incident response have been identified and the virtual laboratory RL2020 will greatly assist within the field of harmonising food control in terms of analytical response. It will not only support in terms of harmonisation, but also speed, cost and effectiveness of response.
- Networks of collaboration will be established, helping to build trust, exchange information and ultimately achieve closer coordination and collaboration.