

Background:

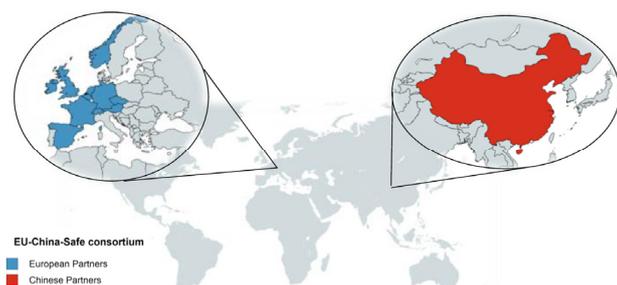
Over recent years, China has become the EU's biggest source of imports and second most important export market. Bilateral EU-China trade amounted to € 520 billion in 2015, and the aim is for the trade to reach € 700 billion by 2020. In Europe and China, consumer trust in the food industry and regulatory authorities has been damaged by a large number of accidental and deliberate food contamination/adulteration incidents. The ability of European Union (EU) companies to export to, and import from China, has been hampered by these safety, traceability, regulatory and fraud issues. Chinese companies trying to export to Europe face similar obstacles. Twenty-first century food supply chains are increasingly complex and highly vulnerable to safety and fraud threats. Increasing demand and growing markets enhance the likelihood of food safety incidents and deliberate contamination, which in turn ruin consumer trust and undermine legitimate trade at domestic and international levels. Several instances of food fraud and contamination have focused attention on product integrity, such as the 2008 Chinese melamine incident, and the 2013 European horsemeat scandal. Furthermore, laboratories in Europe and China are often working to different quality standards and using different analytical methods for producing data for certification/confirmation purposes, which can result in protracted trade disputes/embargoes.

There is a clear need for greater co-operation among those key actors within the EU and China, who are responsible for ensuring food safety, and preventing fraud, to accelerate the achievement of "mutual recognition" in food standards, testing and certification, similar to that already achieved in other areas between these regions.

Strategic objective:

To develop and implement a shared vision of best practice within the EU and China that will enhance food safety, deter food fraud, restore consumer trust, deliver mutual recognition of data and standards and support the flow of agri-food trade between the two trading blocks to promote economic growth.

EU-China-Safe partnership is made up of 33 partners including 15 in the EU and 18 in China.



The facts:

Funding: EU Horizon 2020 Project, Research and Innovation Action & Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST)

Duration: 48 months (September 2017 – August 2021)

Coordinators: prof. Christopher Elliott, QUB, Belfast, UK & prof. Yongning Wu, CFSA, Beijing, China

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EU-China-Safe will:

- Define a shared framework for harmonisation and visualisation of data that will enable convergence of standards and practices
- Improve transparency in management of the food chain through the development of a digitised DNA system and innovative traceability tools
- Develop, in collaboration, new/improved food authenticity surveillance systems
- Develop, in collaboration, improved food safety systems and practices
- Build 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
- Enhance EU-China co-operation and knowledge exchange through a series of joint initiatives on training and dissemination, in the area of assuring the integrity of exported and imported food

The focus of these objectives is to bring about improvements in consumer confidence and safety and facilitate sustainable growth in trade between the EU and China.

EU-China-Safe expected impacts:

- Contribute to the development of a common EU-China vision of global food safety issues that will increase trade and improve trade predictability in key production areas
- Increase consumer confidence in processed agri-food products traded between the EU and China and in domestic markets
- Improve the transparency of the food chain and manufacturers' sense of responsibility, in particular as regards processed agri-food products
- Reduce human health risks linked to food processing and packaging
- Improve traceability tools along the food and feed chains
- Increase EU-China cooperation at technical and scientific levels

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