

PROGRESS REPORT (August 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

- EU consumer perceptions, trust and purchase intentions towards food products made in China were explored via an online consumer survey (n=2993 participants) and engagement with industry and government stakeholders.
- Two online consumer surveys were conducted. Data analysis is ongoing and recommendations for better consumer communication are being formulated. Survey one explored the efficacy and feasibility of a communication strategy (traceability information with an authenticity assurance) for its impact to enhance consumer trust in Chinese garlic as well as adding value and increasing sales. n=282 UK participants and n=292 German participants completed survey one. Survey two compared the efficacy and feasibility of two communication strategies (traceability information vs an authenticity assurance) for their impact to enhance consumer trust in EU baby milk as well as adding value and increasing sales. n=1002 Chinese participants completed the survey.
- A desk-based review of food trade impediments between the EU and China identified two commodities of interest (Chinese peanuts and EU infant formula milk). As Aflatoxin B1 in Chinese peanuts presented the most significant public health concern, a critical review of global legislation was carried out to identify strategies promoting regulatory collaboration and thus trade. This informed a white paper for the early identification and proactive mitigation of aflatoxins in peanuts. Two Deliverable Reports (D5.5 and D5.6) have been submitted.
- The virtual lab, RL2020, continues to progress. The number of topic areas has been expanded to include information on COVID-19 sampling and testing in food. A summary of competency and capacity among project participants previously prepared has been updated. Methods for polar drug analysis transferred to EU laboratories have been added, and a method for nitrofurans residues that was developed and validated in WP4, will be added soon to support the ongoing activity for the future scenario.
- Work on future food safety incident scenarios is underway. 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. Interviews



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with EU and Chinese stakeholders have been conducted, with more from different sectors including regulatory and industry to be completed. The second scenario will be on sustainable food contact materials, to link with work in WP4. Partners involved include Fera, QUB, VSCHT and CFSA. Partners have agreed the work plan for the food contact materials, and are currently identifying and purchasing samples. These will be shared between the participating partners to carry out their analyses, and methods and results will be shared on the virtual laboratory.

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. The data from the online survey on Chinese garlic that took place in the UK and Germany to test the efficacy and feasibility of a communication strategy (traceability information with an authenticity assurance) once analysed will allow recommendations for better consumer communication to be formulated. A second online survey to compare the efficacy and feasibility of two communication strategies for their impact to enhance Chinese consumer trust in EU baby milk has been completed. Publication in peer review literature will highlight the results of this work and inform best practice for communication to retain and build consumer trust in the future.
- Publication of the white paper in peer review literature will inform best practice for the prevention and mitigation of aflatoxin contamination in peanuts.
- 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 continually added to. Methods for veterinary residues and food contact materials will be added as the future scenarios develop.
- The economic analysis of the case studies of the past incidents improved the understanding of the full economic cost of food safety incidents. This will be applied to the planned scenarios on nitrofurans and sustainable food contact materials, which in turn 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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