

PROGRESS REPORT (January 2020)

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 identified two commodities of interest (peanuts and infant formula milk). A questionnaire has been designed and some key stakeholders interviewed.
- A manuscript describing the work exploring EU consumers' (n=2993) perceptions towards purchasing food products made in China (i.e. processed meat products or processed fruit and vegetable products) was submitted for publication in November 2019.
- Data collection has been completed for the Chinese consumer survey to explore perceptions towards purchasing one of two infant milk formulae (domestic or imported) using the theory of planned behaviour. Over 3000 Chinese consumers participated in the survey.
- The virtual lab, RL2020, is progressing well. Details of methods and regulations that are used for food control have been exchanged. Two instrument vendors are collaborating in the EU and China. Validation studies for the analysis of dioxins in food using GC-MS/MS are underway, reference materials and proficiency test samples have been exchanged and analysed demonstrating good instrument performance.
- Work on case studies to examine the economic impact of food incidents is well underway. The case study on the dioxins incident is complete, has been presented at two conferences and a draft manuscript prepared for submission to a peer review journal. Work on the melamine case study continues, with some good collaborations established in China. Planning for scenarios to use for future exercises began in 2019, with possible scenarios circulated to partners. These scenarios will cover topics that reach across several



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workpackages. One will be based on a veterinary medicine / pesticide type incident (comparable to the recent fipronil incident), information is being gathered for the second, CBD products seems the strongest candidate.

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. 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.
- 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. This will be trialled through the use of the RL2020 during the planned scenarios that will take place in the later stage of the project.
- The economic analysis of the case studies of the past incidents, in particular the comparison of different economic models, will move forward the understanding of the full economic cost of food safety incidents. This will also be applied in mapping out the potential economic cost of the planned scenarios.
- Networks of collaboration will be established, helping to build trust, exchange information and ultimately achieve closer coordination and collaboration. This will be further built on by a concerted push to gather and collate information on methods, quality standards and regulations from all partners and stakeholders in the project. This information will be available through RL2020 and will be a useful resource.



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