

Food safety challenges in the EU



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Enforcement of agri-food chain rules

- **Pre-requisite for the proper functioning of the Single Market:** risk-based enforcement (EU, national level – **official controls**)
- Not merely about compliance verification (health, level playing field, consumer protection)
- **High level of harmonisation** → standardisation of methods used by official laboratories
- Crisis management (RASFF, Europhyt, ADNS)
- FVO role

Official controls: key elements (Reg. 882/2004)

- Official controls should be carried out regularly, on a risk basis and with appropriate frequency at all stages of the food chain
- Impartiality, **consistency**, effectiveness
- Multiannual National Control Plans
- Delegation of tasks to official control bodies, under certain conditions
- Regular training of competent authority staff is an obligation for the Member States
- Enforcement action and remedial action

Obligations related to official controls

- Official controls include (i.a.) sampling and testing when needed to verify compliance
- Rules for the designation of **("official") laboratories** to carry out analysis of samples for official controls
- Such laboratories must be **accredited and operate in accordance with international standards**
- Sampling and analysis methods used in the context of official controls shall also comply with relevant Union rules or with internationally accepted protocols

EU Reference Laboratories (EURLs)

- Ensure **high-quality, uniform testing** in the EU
- 43 EURLs
- Receive **annual EU funding** to fulfil their tasks and functions and cover their operational costs
- Average financing for the 2014-2020 period:
16.5 million euros per year
- Commission approves their work programmes every year & can establish new EURLs or change their designation

EURLs – key functions

- Provide National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) with analytical methods and diagnostic techniques, and coordinate their application
- Train staff from NRLs
- Provide the Commission with scientific and technical expertise in relation to laboratory analysis
- Collaborate with competent laboratories in non-EU countries



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Revision of the rules on official controls – "fit for purpose" rules

- Overall aim: strengthen enforcement (including cross-border)
- No major changes for labs & methods
- Improved **cross-border administrative assistance and cooperation**
- **Regular unannounced official controls** directed at **identifying intentional violations ("fraud")**
- Mandatory **EU coordinated control plans**

Strengthening the Commission and MS capacity to address cross-border non-compliances

- 1) **Facilitating the exchange of information**
- 2) **Strengthening** the EU control system
- 3) **Better detection and prevention** (training, exchange of best practices)



1 – Facilitating the exchange of info: The Food Fraud Network

- Created in July 2013
- 28 Contact Points: Liaison Bodies Article 35
- >150 cases exchanged
- Aim:
 - Facilitate AAC in case of suspicion of fraud with a cross-border element
 - Facilitate cooperation between the EC and MS as well as the tasks of coordination of the EC



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1 – Facilitating the exchange of info: The Administrative Assistance and Cooperation system

- IT tool to facilitate compliance with AAC obligations (Title IV of Regulation 882/2004)
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2015/1918 establishing the 'AAC system'
- November 2015: system becomes operational

2 – Strengthening the EU control system: Coordinated control plans

- *Ad-hoc* and time-limited
- Understand the extent of possible fraudulent activity in a certain sector
- Harmonized sampling method and analysis if necessary
- Two coordinated control plans on horse meat in 100% beef labelled goods were completed in 2013/2014
- 2015: two additional EU coordinated control plans

3 – Better detection and prevention: BTSF training

- **Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF)**
- Two new modules on new investigation techniques for **official controls along the food chain in 2014 and 2015**
- Course on investigation techniques to detect "food fraud"
- Course on e-commerce in food, i.e. sales of food and food products on the internet

Funding Research & Development

- Financed by the 7th Framework Programme: 12 M €
(Coordination Fera, UK)
- Harmonise and exploit research and technology to ensure food integrity
- Industry, academia, research institutes, technology providers, global network of stakeholders





Challenges

- **Increasingly complex risks** and **globalisation of the food chain**
- **Fraudulent activities** may undermine the integrity of the system
- **Need to have access to state-of-the art science and technology**
- **Need to prioritise** according to "risks", taking into account scarce resources
- Need to increase cooperation across borders



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/official_controls/index_en.htm