

Research offers 'promise' of improved food safety

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The issue of food safety has rocketed up the political agenda in recent years but despite huge improvements, some concerns and problems still persist. Fears about our food are moving away from issues about ensuring an adequate supply and choice of products towards matters of food safety, animal welfare, plant health and labelling and traceability.

The EU-financed project PROMISE, launched in January 2012, aims to address some of these concerns and issues.

The overall goal of the initiative is to improve and strengthen integration between the EU's new and old Member States and candidate countries regarding [food safety](#). The focus is on common food safety threats and

protecting European consumers.

The 36 month project is linked with several other EU-funded schemes and will benefit from their results and know-how. The general objectives include boosting collaboration and knowledge transfer through exchange of expertise, regional training and [dissemination](#) actions.

Another objective is to integrate public health and national food safety authorities in order to exploit research results. The consortium also seeks to analyse, assess and interpret the risk of introducing new strains of pathogen by illegal importation of food from third countries into the EU, where the food supply chains are not controlled.

PROMISE has successfully organised several meetings to help achieve these objectives. Late last year, in Dublin, it organised a training workshop for young researchers and the first specific stakeholder event. Young researchers from different countries were trained on methods, techniques and practical knowledge of detecting food pathogens. Meanwhile, the first specific stakeholder event, focused on food safety issues due to pathogenic organisms, was offered as a webinar throughout Europe.

At events like this and others, PROMISE brings together stakeholders, such as [public health](#) and national food safety authorities, from EU Member States in order to ensure that research results are fully exploited for standardisation and harmonisation.

PROMISE is coordinated by the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna. Prof Martin Wagner, Head of the Institute for Milk Hygiene, Milk Technology and Food Science, is its scientific coordinator.

Professor Wagner noted, 'The PROMISE scientific approach focuses on microbiological risks and their mitigation. Much is known in the EU and

candidate countries on classical routes of transmission of pathogens within [food chains](#). Nevertheless, border controls at places like airports and border checkpoints seem to be ineffective barriers at preventing import of food items.'

Pathogens attack the food supply chain at certain points, usually in the pre-harvest or harvest area, and can then survive decontamination procedures through their adaptive responses to remain in the final products.

Another major part of the PROMISE focuses on dissemination, exploitation, training and an exchange programme for researchers.

Dissemination and training activities, such as the training session for young researchers in Dublin, are being organised. Besides a project website which communicates general information on the project and its results, further communication material will be produced.

For industry and SMEs, special dissemination workshops will be prepared in close conjunction with the target group concerned.

A successful review meeting was organised in Vienna in October 2013 and showed that PROMISE is in line with its objectives and workplan.

More information: www.promise-net.eu/

Provided by CORDIS

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