

## Research at the BfR: Project on the safety of milk and dairy products in Zambia launched

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The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is expanding its international research activities: on 1 September 2016, the externally funded project “*Staphylococcus (S.) aureus* in the dairy food chain in Zambia – combatting foodborne illness and antimicrobial resistance in humans (project acronym “SAD Zambia)” will be launched. The overall goal is to help improve food safety and hence food security in the southern regions of Africa.

In the southern regions of Africa, agriculture plays a key part in combatting poverty. Growing production of foods of animal origin also implies new food safety challenges. In one of its research projects, the BfR is exploring the question of how to enhance safety in the production and distribution of milk and dairy products in Zambia to help improve food security in the country.

As a first step, possible weak points in the dairy food chain in Zambia will be analysed on the basis of epidemiological field studies in different provinces of the country. The project’s purposes are to identify whether the dairy value chain has to be considered as a pathway through which the bacteria *Staphylococcus (S.) aureus* can be transmitted to humans. On the one hand, the focus will be on toxin-forming *staphylococcus* strains. On the other hand, it is foreseen to study the presence of Methicillin-resistant *S. aureus*, i.e. antimicrobial-resistant strains in the dairy food chain. The assessment task also includes a comparison between traditional rearing and modern management systems. The analyses of the characteristics of the collected bacterial strains as well as comparisons of strains will subsequently be conducted at the BfR.

As a next step, approaches to reduce transmission and monitor zoonotic and antimicrobial-resistant *S. aureus* in the dairy food chain in Zambia are to be developed.

By building up research capacities in Zambia and networking with various participants and institutions on the ground in Zambia, a long-term partnership and a research network will be established which will be significant for future challenges in the area of food security in southern regions of Africa. Besides the BfR, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the University of Zambia (UNZA) and the Central Veterinary Research Institute (CVRI) as part of the Zambian Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries are involved in the research project.

The project “SAD Zambia” will start on 1 September 2016 and lasts three years. It is funded by the programme “World Nutrition” of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL): [http://www.bmel.de/DE/Landwirtschaft/Welternahrung/welternahrung\\_node.html](http://www.bmel.de/DE/Landwirtschaft/Welternahrung/welternahrung_node.html)

### About the BfR

The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is a scientifically independent institution within the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in Germany. It advises the Federal Government and Federal Laender on questions of food, chemical and product safety. The BfR conducts its own research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.

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