

Communication 056/2023

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Innovative Solutions and Consistent Standards for International Food Safety

A delegation from the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), led by its President Professor Dr Dr Andreas Hensel, met with national institutions from the fields of risk assessment and consumer protection during their stay in China. A visit to the Chinese Academy of Inspection and Quarantine (CAIQ), with which BfR has had a cooperation agreement since 2009, provided an opportunity to discuss further areas of cooperation. These included toxicological research and chemical detection methods in food and consumer products.

Additionally, BfR presented several lectures at the China International Food Safety & Quality Conference (CIFSQ) held in Beijing. Professor Hensel emphasised in his speech that the digitalisation of food and feed safety will provide a push like few other technologies before. The key tools that will emerge from this will include international databases for big data, electronic delivery notes for better traceability of food and feed in the event of a food-borne disease outbreak, as well as artificial intelligence for automated data analysis. In this regard, the BfR has already established the "Study Centre for Food Chain Modelling and Artificial Intelligence" study centre. A particular focus of the BfR lies in utilizing methods from the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for its assessment work.

Accompanying presentations by the BfR delegation focused on the issues of food fraud and risk communication. Fraudulent practices of counterfeit food are complex, global problems faced by food and feed authorities as well as the industry. In this context, the challenges of developing and implementing rapid analytical methods on an international scale were highlighted. The presentation on risk communication explored how digital solutions can facilitate the creation of new forms of engagement and (re-)build consumer trust in light of the increasing complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity of (food) risks.

Further stations of the BfR delegation included the China National Center for Food Safety Risk Assessment (CFSA) and the National Research Institute of Food & Fermentation Industries Corporation Limited (CNRIFFI). The CFSA is a scientific institution that was founded in 2011 as part of a German-Chinese cooperation, with the assistance of expertise from the BfR and the German Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL). The BfR has maintained agreements for scientific exchange with both the CFSA and CNRIFFI for many years, so discussions centered around future collaboration.

The Global Forum of Leaders of Agricultural Science and Technology (GLAST) was held for the seventh time this year in Sanya, China, to provide a common international platform for responsible agricultural academies and institutions. The initiative is led by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). BfR was invited as a longstanding partner of CAAS in this effort. Representatives from 49 different countries participated in this event to collectively discuss global challenges and explore potential solutions concerning sustainable agricultural development. The primary focus was on the exchange of information and experience between partnerships among countries, international organisations and the private sector. Participants considered GLAST as an opportunity to engage in dialogue and explore potential partnerships. These collaborations ranged in scale from minor to major, extending beyond the confines of the event. This global exchange of knowledge remains a fundamental support for BfR, given its potential to produce synergies that positively influence its daily work.

Further information regarding international collaborations can be found on the BfR website.

An overview of the BfR's international collaborations is also available here:
https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/european_and_international_co_operations-10361.html

About the BfR

The German 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. The BfR advises the Federal Government and the States ('Laender') on questions of food, chemicals and product safety. The BfR conducts independent research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.

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