

Report of the Danish National Workshop

SAFEACC WP 4

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1. Introduction

On September 25, 13 participants from business, consumer interest groups, standardisation bodies and research institutions gathered at Hotel Comwell in Middelfart for the Danish national workshop (see Annex 1 for a list of participants).

Unfortunately, we were only able to cover two of the three product groups in the workshop. Invitees from the fruit business were either unable to attend or not interested. Also, there were no participants from the retail trade. It was positive that several of the invitees unable to attend complained that they had prior engagements they had to keep, but that they were very interested in the project and would like to be kept on the “mailing list” in case similar activities were organised in the future.

Major topics discussed by participants were the importance of process technology for food safety, the power of retailing and the importance of retail practises for food safety and for making quality food products available to consumers as well as the role consumers play, both in relation to their willingness-to-pay for food safety and their ability to handle food products safely.

1.1 Global Food Network

After each workshop participant had briefly presented them selves, Lars Esbjerg gave them an introduction to the Global Food Network (see Annex 3). It was explained to the participants that Global Food Network is a EU Concerted Action Project with participants from 12 ACP, Mercosur and EU countries. Then, the background for the project and its purposes were presented. It was explained how the national workshop fit into the overall structure of work packages. Finally, it was explained that the purposes of the workshop were to discuss and validate the findings of the national inventory (Work package 3, Assignment 2) as well as contributing to the identification of gaps in our knowledge about food safety and quality in relation to trans-national supply chains and networks.

1.2 Food safety and quality in Denmark

Following the introduction to the Global Food Network project, some of the key aspects of the national inventory were presented. After briefly providing an overview of Danish legislation regarding food safety and food quality, standards and standardisation was discussed. In this connection, a participant from the Danish Standards Association provided an update regarding the proposed ISO22000 standard. She said that interest in ISO22000 had been so great that it would take longer than expected to finalise the new standard. Next the bottlenecks identified in the national inventory were presented and a brief overview over market trends was provided.

2. Better food safety: Release the market forces

Jan Mousing followed with an impassioned and somewhat polemical plea for increasing the role of market forces in order to increase food safety (see Annex 3). He argued that politicians, experts and the press determine what issues related to food safety it is relevant to consider in the public discourse. In contrast, consumers and the food industry are not heard, Mr. Mousing claimed.

Along with social scientists, consumers and the food industry were also constituted as being without influence in determining what methods were relevant for dealing with problems in relation to food safety. In this connection, Mr. Mousing identified authorities, the health service, universities (i.e., natural scientists) and sector research institutions as influential. Mr. Mousing collectively referred to these actors as the “health experts.” Mr. Mousing argued that the market is out of effect. The agenda is owned by the authorities and methods is the domain of the experts

The field of food safety is plagued by a number of dogmas, it was argued. Firstly, food safety is considered to be too important to leave to the market – government authorities have to take charge of these issues to make sure that consumers are offered safe food products. Second, food safety is considered a basic product attribute, which consumers are not willing to pay extra for. Finally, consumers are constituted as unfit to shoulder part of the responsibility for food safety. According to Mr. Mousing, the consequences of these dogmas is that priorities are often defined based on emotions rather than facts; that methods used to ensure that food products are safe are far removed from the everyday life of consumers and that the commercial market for systems designed to ensure food safety is surprisingly limited,

Mr. Mousing called for attitudes to change in order for the market to function in relation to food safety. Authorities have to acknowledge that although food safety is important, there is a role to be played by the market. As cases in point, he pointed to the car industry and the pharmaceutical industry. The task of ensuring food safety should be moved to the producers, who should be charged with setting goals and documenting their processes and results. Producers should be able to make claims in relation to food safety, as this will lead to competition argued Mr. Mousing. Mr. Mousing concluded his presentation by arguing that market-based product, process and technological development should focus on consumers’ value perceptions.

3. Market orientation in value chains

In the final presentation Klaus Grunert provided two examples of the market orientation of value chains (see Annex 3). The value chains for frozen Norwegian cod to the UK and Danish bacon to the UK were analysed in terms of the market intelligence on end users collected by different actors in the value chain, the extent to which this information is disseminated throughout the value chains and how different actors in these value chains respond to the market intelligence.

4. Developments in the field of food quality and safety

It was difficult for the workshop participants to discuss what important developments there had been in the areas of food safety and food quality on a general level. The few examples of important developments that were mentioned were all based on the personal experience of the individual workshop participant and were mostly related to fish products (see Matrix 1).

Matrix 1 Important developments

Important developments	Actors
Consumer attitudes and behaviour are influenced by what the experts say and the media coverage. As an example, it was mentioned that the market for cod in Sweden had collapse because of media coverage.	Experts, press, consumers
Food retailers pose demands regarding food safety and quality.	Coop was regarded as the only Danish food retailer to conducts serious audits
Food retailers have become more powerful.	
It is difficult to ensure that fresh fish is kept at the right temperatures because retailers want to distribute fish together with fresh meat, which is kept at 4-5°	Retailing, transporters
The fisheries policy of the EU influences the availability of raw materials.	EU, marine biologists.
The supply of fish has become more differentiated. There is a greater variety in the quality of fish and greater willingness to pay on the side of consumers.	Fish processors, retailing
Consumers have become accustomed to not taking responsibility for food safety. Consumers have been declared incapable of managing their own affairs and as a result only look at the expiration date.	Experts, press, food industry
Packaging concepts allowing for greater traceability will be launched shortly.	Packaging manufacturers

Among the important developments identified were: the increasing power of food retailers, that consumers have become accustomed to not taking responsibility for food safety and that it is difficult to distribute fish products under optimal conditions.

5. Obstacles to interactions among actors

Considerably more time was used to discuss bottlenecks. Workshop participants were asked to identify bottlenecks in trans-national supply chains in relation to food safety and food quality, to offer solutions for overcome these bottlenecks and to indicate, which actors were or should be responsible. Nevertheless, bottlenecks were often identified without participants suggesting solutions or pointing out responsible agents.

Among the bottlenecks identified by workshop participants were: the goods reception at retail outlets, food safety regulation and personnel lacking basic statistical skills (see Matrix 2). Furthermore, several bottlenecks were identified in relation to consumers, whose shopping behaviour was argued to be habitualised and who are in a hurry when they shop for food. Therefore it is difficult to successfully launch new products offering higher quality or food safety. Consumers were constituted as unwilling to pay for food safety. Furthermore consumers were argued to lack basic skills and knowledge necessary for cooking high quality meals and ensuring that food safety is not compromised in the home.

Matrix 2 Bottlenecks, solutions and responsible agents

Bottlenecks	Solutions	Responsible agents
Goods reception at retail outlets – products are often left outside stores, which means that they are not stored under optimal conditions	Temperature loggers, education of personnel	Retailers, producers
Distribution of fish	MAP-packaging	Producers
Supply of raw materials (fish)		
Consumers lack knowledge about fish	Information campaigns, quality labelling	
Differences between objective and perceived quality because of shopping experience	Storytelling	
Ignorance of basic statistics means that personnel is not able to take samples correctly or to interpret results	Training of employees in production companies and retailers	
Retail structure is a bottleneck for small producers		Retailers
Food safety regulation is a barrier to product development	Increase role of the market	Authorities
Consumers not willing to pay for food safety – one of the dogmas identified earlier	Labelling of food safety	Consumers, authorities
Trade-off between traceability and trend to convenience products		
Lack of documentation		
Consumers are in a hurry and food shopping is often habitualised		
Quality transparency		

The solution to many of the bottlenecks was argued to be “creativity” – in terms of packaging, training of personnel and consumers and marketing of novel food products offering higher quality and food safety.

Matrix 3 Research opportunities

<p>Critical limits. Some workshop participants suggested that critical limits have not been defined for all relevant ingredients. In relation to critical limits, it should be studied how these should be defined, communication, harmonised and what the economic consequences of setting critical limits were.</p>
<p>How consumers handle foods in their homes. This was argued to be the perhaps most important food safety problem. Topics for research could be how to best to communicate to consumers how food products should be handled in the home and how good housekeeping virtues were maintained. In this connection it was suggested to develop a HACCP for the home</p>
<p>A was also suggested to study how foods are handled in stores and in transit.</p>
<p>Intelligent packaging was suggested as a tool for identifying where food safety problems arise.</p>
<p>Barriers to implementation of new technologies. What are they and how can they be surmounted?</p>
<p>A related topic suggested was that quality control and food safety controls were mentioned as barriers to innovation. Is this really the case and how can this be rectified?</p>
<p>Consumers' willingness-to-pay for food safety and food quality was mentioned several times as a problem. It was therefore suggested to study willingness-to-pay for different products, different qualities, different countries and different types of information.</p>
<p>How to design process equipment. It was suggested to study how process equipment should be designed from a food safety perspective, how different machines are best connected to each other, how should surfaces be treated, what lubricants should be used, what are the implications for food safety of using technical aids and what the economic consequences would be</p>
<p>Traceability of food quality and food safety.</p>
<p>Spices were mentioned as an area about which only little is known.</p>
<p>Old fashioned foods and new technology. How is food safety and naturalness related</p>
<p>What natural alternatives are there to pesticides?</p>
<p>What is quality? It was suggested to review different definitions and meanings of food quality.</p>
<p>Is food safety used as a technical trade barrier?</p>
<p>A discourse analysis of the food safety discourse. What actors are heard and influence actions, legislation and perceptions.</p>
<p>Primary productions in distant areas. How can producers be informed and their practices changed so that they meet European standards and requirements.</p>

6. Opportunities for collaboration among actors

Before the second group discussion, it was decided to combine the two groups into one. Participants were reminded that one of the purposes of Global Food Network is to establish an international research agenda regarding food safety and food quality in relation to trans-national supply chains. Given this purpose, participants were then

asked to help identify areas where there is a lack of research-based knowledge. This exercise resulted in a substantial number of research opportunities being identified (see Matrix 3).

Given that consumers themselves were identified as one of the most important bottlenecks in relation to food safety, it was suggested to study how consumers handle food products in order to identify what skills consumers are lacking and where food safety is comprised. In continuation of this it was suggested that a HACCP for the home could be developed, as this could help consumers identify areas where they should change their practices. It was also argued that further studies of consumers' willingness-to-pay for food safety and food quality were needed.

Process technologies were argued to be another important area for future study, as the process machinery used was argued to be an important risk factor, as were the auxiliary materials such as lubricants used.

Food safety regulation was argued to be a barrier to innovation and implementation of new technologies and to be used a trade barrier. Research could help indicate how food safety should be regulated without making innovation difficult. Furthermore research could indicate how food safety should be regulated without making cross-border trade difficult or impossible.

7. Next steps

Several workshop participants applauded the cross-functional nature of the workshop and it was suggested that similar events should be organised in the future, perhaps in collaboration with other actors working with food safety and food quality. For instance, one workshop participant pointed out that a network of quality managers organised by the Food Industry (a branch of the Confederation of Danish Industries).

8. Overall impression of the workshop

Our overall impression of the national workshop is favourable. Participants expressed great satisfaction with the possibility to discuss topics related to food safety and high quality foods across traditional functional and disciplinary boundaries. Many participants were very enthusiastic.

Annex 1 List of participants

Nina Ahn, Danish Standards Association

Kenneth Baltzer, Danish Research Institute of Food Economics

Lars Esbjerg, MAPP Centre, Aarhus School of Business

Alan Friis, BioCentrum, Danish Technical University

Eva Høy Engelund, BioCentrum, Danish Technical University

Klaus G. Grunert, MAPP Centre, Aarhus School of Business

Pia Ibsen, Danish Standards Associations

Mette Larsen, Thorfisk

Anne Kathrine Mikkelsen, Skare Food

Jan Mousing, Øresund FoodNetwork and Lattec I/S

Jette Nielsen, Danish Institute for Fisheries Research

Peter Skøtt, Thorfisk

Camilla Udsen, Forbrugerrådet [Danish Consumer Council]

Annex 2 Programme of the workshop

The titles of presentations have been translated into English.

- 09:30 Coffee**
- 10:00 Welcome and introduction round**
Klaus G. Grunert, MAPP Centre
- 10:15 Introduction to Global Food Network**
Lars Esbjerg, MAPP Centre
- 10:30 Food safety and food quality in Denmark**
Lars Esbjerg, MAPP Centre
- 11:00 Better food safety: Release the market forces**
Jan Mousing, Lattec and Øresund FoodNetwork
- 11:30 Market orientations in value chains**
Klaus G. Grunert, MAPP Centre
- 11:45 Group discussion 1: Developments, challenges and bottlenecks in relation to food safety and high quality foods in Denmark**
- 12:30 Presentation of results of group discussion 1**
Moderator: Lars Esbjerg, MAPP Centre
- 13:00 Lunch**
- 14:00 Group discussion 2: Possibilities and strategies for collaboration among actors on food safety and high quality foods**
- 14:45 Coffee**
- 15:00 Presentation of results of group discussion 2**
Moderator: Lars Esbjerg, MAPP Centre
- 15:30 Where do we go from here?**
Moderator: Klaus G. Grunert, MAPP Centre
- 16:00 End of the workshop**

Annex 3 Global Food Network