

Critical and Emerging issues in Food Safety and Quality

Critical issues are those that are the most pressing ones, and as such need to be addressed and considered as priorities. They can be known issues that are actually present/already occurring or even recurring. They can also be completely new or emerging. With the word “issues” is meant either hazards/challenges or opportunities or even trends that might have an impact on food safety and quality.

Emerging issues are those that are new, unexpected, or can cause change in the status quo. Many factors inside and outside the food production system(s) could directly and/or indirectly lead to emerging issues in food safety and quality.

Examples of “drivers of change” that could lead to emerging issues

- **Globalization of trade:** Food safety must be considered within a global context that is dynamic and evolving as part of the globalization process: increased international trade, more integrated markets, more rapid adoption of new technologies, increased market concentration, and information transfer, can all have important implications (both positive and negative) in food safety.
- **New distribution channels**
Increase in online retailers will eventually get to the food retail market; are there any food safety risks that might arise from such a change of the retail market, where the local store might be replaced with automated warehouses and logistics in distributing it to the end consumer?
- **Economic factors:** budgetary pressures on national governments to improve efficiencies and reduce spending on national food safety systems; the ability/ willingness of food enterprises to implement adequate food safety measures; trends in food adulteration and food fraud; fluctuation of food prices. All these, and many other economic factors can impact on food safety at different levels.
- **Climate change:** Climate change, perhaps the most compelling environmental issue of our time, can affect patterns of occurrence of food safety hazards. Indeed international commitment to address environmental issues has a significant impact on agricultural development strategies and on food safety
- **New technologies:** The increasing role of new and emerging technologies in food production, post-harvest treatment, processing, packaging and sanitary treatment is also significant in the context of food safety and more globalised food trade.
- **Scientific progress:** Technical and scientific innovation has multiple impacts on food safety and its management. More sensitive detection methods are providing new tools for investigating and indeed discovering new food safety hazards. Recent advances in food safety related sciences give us a better understanding of food-borne disease, and the role played by some food contaminants in the etiology of some pathologies and disorders.
- **Urbanization:** With the global population growing there is a sustained trend of migration from rural to urban areas. Cities (and surrounding areas) are increasingly becoming places where food is produced (i.e. urban and peri-urban agriculture). This plays an important role in how people procure food, what people eat, the nature of food traded and the interactions among food systems, people and the environment.
- **Regulatory landscape**
The regulatory landscape is changing with an increased importance on bilateral or multilateral treaties, emergence of private standards etc that can affect the food supply chain.
- **Public attention to food safety:** Increasing public awareness of food safety hazards, concern over hazards to health attributable to food hazards and reduced confidence in the ability of current food supply systems to manage food safety risks are additional factors to be considered in the food safety evolving context. At the same time food insecurity – an extreme manifestation of a large and growing wealth disparity within countries and among countries – remains a pressing global concern with important implications for decision-making on food safety at all levels.

Please note that the above are just some examples of drivers and the list is not complete. In responding to question #1 please consider these and any other broad drivers that you think could lead to emerging issues in food safety and quality.

1 - Identification of critical and emerging issues

Please identify what you believe to be the 3-5 most critical issues related to Food Safety and Quality, from present to the next 2 - 5 years .	Please identify what you believe to be the 3-5 most important emerging issues related to Food Safety and Quality in the next 2 to 5 years .
1) The implementation of the control process (HACCP), traceability system, the sanitary hygienic condition are not appropriate and well implemented from the food industry.	1) There is an increased of positive cases of mycotoxins, hormones, β -agonist and antibacterial drugs. In case of mycotoxins is important to monitor the feed of animals in all the districts in Albania in order to prevent their metabolites in the products with animal origin. The hormones and β -agonist is an indicator of the use as growth promoter. Antibacterial seems to have a high levels.
2) There are still cases that the slaughter of animals and commercialisation of the meat is done in the inappropriate conditions and structures.	3) There are indications of the use of prohibited veterinary drugs.
4) There are cases of Campylobacter in the poultry meat but the magnitude of the problem is unknown. There are over-norm cases of the E. Coli and staphylococcus in food of animal origin. There are cases of Salmonella in food of animal origin.	5)
6) There has been cases of E. Coli in bivalve molluscs and one of the reasons can be the heavy water flows in the lake where the mollusc are cultured.	7)
8) Limited knowledge on the procedure of maintenance, treatment, the requirement of the production and processing of the food of animal and plant origin from the food processors, retailers and farmers.	9)

2 - For each issue you have identified above please provide a short explanation¹ (1 or 2 paragraphs)

There are a lot of efforts to improve the food safety and quality in Albania. The National Food Authority and the Food Safety and Veterinary Institute are main institutions dealing the food safety and quality issues. The Food Safety and Veterinary Institute implement ISO 17025:2005 in some laboratories. Legislation has been approximated with the one of EU legislation. However, risk assessment, management and communication remains a challenge for food safety. The Border Inspection points remain still problematic as there is the lack of the infrastructure for

¹ In providing a **short explanation** of 1 -2 paragraphs please briefly explain: 1) why you selected that issue (i.e. on what basis - information/data, knowledge or assumption - you made that choice) and 2) the expected and/or actual impacts of the issue (whether the impact would be sector-specific, affect only some sub-populations or countries/regions, whether it would be related to public health or trade etc)

the physical control, such as refrigerator rooms and quarantine, which limits the inspection activities. The National Food Authority in the district level needs transportation vehicles in order to facilitate the inspection activities. The application of the national programmes on the monitoring of residues, microbiological criteria and contaminants in live animals, food products with animal origin or not animal origin is not at an appropriate level due to limited budget. The monitoring of food additives is not done due to the lack of infrastructure and trained human resources. The indicators of authenticity of the food, i.e. physical chemical indicators are not analysed. There is a need to have from the Codex Alimentarius the general list of the allowed additives and the methods of chemical analysis for the food products. The salmonellosis monitoring plan needs to be implemented in order to guaranty the commercialization of the products.