Food industry stakeholders' perspectives on sharing information to prevent and detect food integrity issues

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One of the biggest challenges facing the food industry is assuring food integrity (FI). Dealing with complex FI-issues requires a multi-dimensional approach. Preventive actions and early reactive responses are key for the food supply chain. Information sharing could facilitate the identification and prevention of FI-issues. This study investigates attitudes towards a food integrity information sharing system (FIISS) among industry stakeholders in the European food supply chain. Insights into stakeholders' interest to participate and their conditions for joining a FIISS are assessed.

A total of 119 food industry stakeholders (46% SMEs) – covering all major food sectors susceptible to FI-issues – participated in an online quantitative survey between November 2017 and February 2018 as the first round of a Delphi study. The second round of the study consists of presenting the findings to industry and other stakeholders in an online qualitative feedback survey.

Three distinct groups of stakeholders were identified based on reported frequency of occurrence of and likelihood of detecting FI-issues. Food industry stakeholders strongly support the concept of a FIISS with an attitude score of 4.49 (S.D.=0.57) on a 5-point scale; and their willingness to participate is high (81%). Consensus exists regarding the advantages a FIISS can yield towards prevention and detection. A food safety authority (74%) or a newly established organisation (84%) were believed to be the most suitable third parties to organise a FIISS. Reactions diverged concerning the required level of transparency and the type of data stakeholders might be willing to share in a FIISS.