

The BfR launches scientific network for authenticity testing of food and feed

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Does my asparagus really come from Germany? Has sugar been added to this acacia honey? Do food and feed really contain what's listed on the label? The possibilities of analytical testing of these and other questions were the focus of the first meeting of the scientific network for authenticity testing of food and feed held in Berlin on 13 and 14 June 2016. On the invitation of the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), experts from different organisations of the Federal Government, the supervisory authorities of the federal states and the universities reported on their experiences and activities in authenticity testing. The objective of the meeting was to promote scientific exchange in this area of research to foster future developments in analysis.

As a first result of the two-day event, the participants were able to define possible synergies regarding different analysis methods for their research and routine activities on various questions. In addition, common challenges in relation to the generation and use of databases and standardisation of procedures were identified. In the medium term, this can help research activities focus on new analytical procedures and to accelerate developments. The newly created scientific network is to be further expanded with a view to studying questions in the area of chemical and biomolecular authenticity testing of food and feed at regular intervals.

The BfR sees authenticity testing as an integral part of proactive consumer health protection. In the past there have repeatedly been cases of adulterated food and feed posing health risks to consumers. Apart from adulterations such as the illegal addition of substances, the main issues which concern authenticity testing cover the geographical origin, species and variety differentiation as well as different production methods used for food and feed. The research of the BfR focuses on new analytical approaches to guarantee the authenticity of foods. So-called non-targeted procedures should make it possible to record characteristic fingerprints of a food or feed and to check it against a reference library. In this way, it is hoped that it will be possible to answer analytically complex questions such as that of the geographical origin of products and their specific variety.

FAQs on food fraud and authenticity testing can be found at:

<http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/fragen-und-antworten-zu-lebensmittelbetrug-und-authentizitaetspruefung.pdf>

All BfR publications on the topic of authenticity testing can be accessed at:

http://www.bfr.bund.de/de/a-z_index/authentizitaet-196637.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.