

A glimpse into emerging food safety hazards: the FoodSafeR Project

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EFSA defines an emerging food safety risk as “a risk resulting from a newly identified hazard to which a significant exposure may occur, or from an unexpected new or increased significant exposure and/or susceptibility to a known hazard.” The latter increased exposure can be the result of the increased presence of the known hazard and/or the increased exposure to this hazard. Food safety “hazards” or “issues” are the (biological, physical or chemical) agents present in our food system (existing or emerging) which may cause a harmful impact on the public health of our European citizens. The risk of a particular food safety hazard or issue will depend on the occurrence (prevalence, concentration) of the hazard in our food, the applied food preparation method by the consumers, the consumption of the food (dose), and its potential impact on human health (acute or chronic effect, short- or long-term effect). All this happens in a changing physical and political environment and the resilience of the European food system has been critically hallmarked. The EU-funded project, FoodSafeR, is testing future impacts on food safety and developing indicators for the trends that project forward into the future. The consortium has selected eight microbiological and chemical hazard scenarios that include food system structures, foodborne pathogens and chemicals. It critically calls for improvements to current food safety management practices and explores how these may be achieved via modern communication tools.

Acknowledgments: This project has been funded by Horizon Europe grant number 101060698