



Final Declaration of the 5. Food Safety Congress

Organised in the coordination of the Food Safety Association; with the cooperation of the International Association for Food Protection (IAFP) and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock; and with the support of 29 other bodies including trade associations and non-governmental organisations, the 5. Food Safety Congress was held on 7-8 May 2015 with the participation of more than 600 representatives from a number of countries. The congress achieved the representation of all stages of the food chain and provided a comprehensive arena for the discussion of current issues and solutions including analysis methods, risk assessment, authenticity of foodstuffs and misinformation with the predominant theme of microbiology.

Considering the fact that the ethical dimension of food safety issues is attached increased importance with every passing day both in Turkey and around the world, this theme was addressed in detail by the congress with a view to enabling all stakeholders in food safety to understand each other better and to adopt a common approach.

With this perspective, food safety was deliberated upon with its myriad of different aspects and the notable outputs obtained in all sessions and at the panel were compiled to form the following final declaration. Congress presentations and details may be accessed at www.gidaguvenligikongresi.org.

The major themes reflected by the two-day congress are shared with the public through the present declaration. The final declaration of our congress will be shared with all relevant organisations with the aim of enabling this document to shed light on any steps that may be taken by any stakeholders in the field of food safety in the forthcoming process.

- It will be possible to ensure food safety only through the due implementation of risk analysis. To this end, it was stated that;
 - Risk assessment should be carried out by an independent board of independent scientists.
 - The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, as the competent authority in charge of food safety, should enable risk management to be implemented in a transparent and participatory manner.
 - Scientific risk communication should be more efficient in utilising independent scientists in order to secure consumers' trust.

This will offer the only means both to minimise the occasional unrealistic provisions observed in communiqués and regulations and to secure consumers' trust.

On the other hand, the improvement of the control capacity requires the employment of a higher number of experts; more training; and more investment in technical infrastructure.

- Foodstuffs harbour certain risks to consumer health. These risks are inherent also in products classified by consumers as “natural” and in homemade products. Approximately ¼ of foodborne disease agents are associated with **microbial risks**. A significant percentage of these diseases are

also related to animal products. Therefore, the most important instrument in securing food safety is represented by duly implemented hygiene rules.

- The legislation on microbiological criteria regulated to ensure food safety should be revised and the criteria designated for commercially marketed products and the criteria developed for the monitoring of business processes should be reconsidered with a view to securing their fitness for purpose. In addition, the rule of thumb should be the consideration of current data as they may have changed in time and the repetition of risk assessment in the light of the constantly renewed scientific knowledge.
- The design of food producing businesses in such a manner as to prevent any contamination and to comply with hygienic design rules is also an important factor for food safety. Establishments that have not yet complied with essential hygiene criteria in Turkey should be provided with the necessary structural changes, equipment and information with a view to enabling all of them to utilise the legal period allocated to them in the most efficient manner possible and to comply with the applicable hygiene criteria.
- Efforts to identify food poisoning on a case basis and to establish concrete connections with its causes should be maintained at an increasing pace. From this perspective, joint work, systematic exchange of information and cooperation should be ensured between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock and between professionals of the food chain and medical doctors.
- The presence and development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria constitute one of the most important issues of our day. In the context of antibiotics administered to humans and animals to combat diseases, the rule of thumb should be to act carefully in using antibiotics in the correct and conscious manner; to handle cases of erroneous dosage and duration with utmost care; and to avoid antibiotic use unless absolutely necessary for healthcare purposes. **Unconscious antibiotic use** strengthens resistance in bacteria. In addition, scientific circles have brought to the agenda the fact that this property can be exchanged among bacteria. The inevitably essential duty of both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock to achieve success in combating human and animal diseases is to address the matter in the most sensitive and effective manner possible.
- A number of issues including the identification and management of food allergens; GMO analyses; and risk assessment and control of packaging materials and new technologies also bring to the agenda the necessity to designate the right analysis methods.
- Efforts should be undertaken to improve accepted analysis methods used in food inspections constantly to function faster and more sensitively. The agenda also incorporates the occasional utilisation of different methods at the same time or the performance of certain additional testing. Specifically, the more widespread use of DNA-based methods in food analyses (the expansion of the field of use) and the efforts of Turkish engineers to design portable (simple) devices and kits in this field are encouraging developments.
- **Food fraud** has become an important issue in Turkey and all around the world. The data of the World Customs Organisation specify the annual cost of food fraud around the world as 49 billion US Dollars. The advances in science improve not only analysis methods, but also forms and dimensions of fraud. It is obvious that efforts to combat this situation cannot succeed only through laboratory analyses. All parties of the field should be involved in combating efforts together in order to ensure the wide acceptance of ethical values in the society and the due implementation of registration/approval/traceability practices.
- Another issue that is as important as food fraud is the misinformation disseminated by persons that hold no expertise in food. This issue is experienced not only in our country, but also in all countries

of the world, as is the case with food fraud. Food is an indispensable part of human life and therefore, negative and inaccurate news disseminated in this regard create a negative influence on consumers and irrational changes in their behaviours. **Combating misinformation** requires the enactment of scientifically oriented legal arrangements. The rule of thumb here should be the development of essential scientific outputs for such arrangements through transparent processes incorporating the contributions of the most competent experts. These outputs should be developed at the international level and implemented in all countries of the world. Expectations and discourses that contradict such outputs represent approaches that fall far from serving food safety.

Wishing all humanity healthy days with sustained access to safe food as their fundamental right...