



PRESS RELEASE

European Network of Excellence addresses Melamine issues

(Vienna, 14/10/2008) **MoniQA, an EU funded project connecting global players in the field of food safety and quality, addresses the Melamine crisis and other emerging issues in food safety.**

Globalized trade in food means more choice for consumers and benefits for European economies. However, as the current crisis on melamine in Chinese milk shows, globalization can also threaten human health. MoniQA (**M**onitoring and **Q**uality **A**ssurance in the Food Supply Chain) brings together over 100 institutions from 35 countries and 5 continents. We are therefore able to react in a fast and comprehensive way to emerging food safety issues.

The melamine issue was extensively discussed during the recent MoniQA consortium meeting and the first International MoniQA Conference in Rome (Italy) with presentations on the current state of play by Xiaofang Pei and Lishi Zhang from Sichuan University, China. Delegates also listened to a Canadian regulator's perspective and were informed about the socio-economic ramifications, which will be analysed in a MoniQA case study. These presentations are available for download at www.moniqua.org.

In the future, MoniQA will devote a share of its resources to upcoming potential and emerging food safety issues. Resources that can be devoted to such issues include the MoniQA databases on available infrastructure and the food quality and safety assessment database. This will lead to better communication of available analytical methods and validation. Our partners will also establish cooperation between laboratories on screening techniques. MoniQA will make this knowledge available to food companies and other actors and will become part of a rapid alert system, turning into a reference source for methods and other relevant information.

Key facts about Melamine in China:

Based on information supplied by Xiaofang Pei and Lishi Zhang from Sichuan University, China – MoniQA partners

- Melamine consist of 66% Nitrogen and is sometimes illegally added to food products in order to increase the apparent protein content.
- Chinese melamine production started in 1958; today China is the largest melamine exporter in the world
- In 2007, melamine was discovered in pet food, resulting in the death of 16 pets in the US and a recall of 60 million packages
- The first case with human babies was detected in Nanjing in March 2008-
- Up to September 19, 54.000 babies were reported sick in China, at least four have subsequently died. Most babies are between 5 and 11 months old
- More than 1 thousand tons of milk powder were recalled, leading to the potential bankruptcy of the companies concerned – many countries refuse to import milk products from China
- As counter measures 1600 medical teams were dispatched to screen babies on a grass root level. Additionally, 4500 institutions in the whole country have participated in (free) infant screening and treatment
- The Chinese authorities have conducted a thorough investigation of the source of milk, the production and the finished product. New regulations and quality standards have been implemented and farmers have received subsidies for their production loss. As a result, no new melamine cases have been detected after September 18, 2008. In China consumer confidence has gradually returned.
- More work needs to be done concerning establishing a technique and system of inspection of protein and more laboratories capable of undertaking such analysis need to be set up

Further information: A press pack containing this press release as well as melamine relevant information from China and Canada and a summary of melamine news is available for download on www.moniqua.org.



About the MoniQA project

Funded by the European Union, the MoniQA project establishes long-lasting cooperation among leading food research institutions, food and biotech industries, as well as small- and medium-sized businesses to ensure food quality and safety for consumers.

In today's globalised economy it is vital that food quality and safety methods and standards are harmonized on a global level. The European Union is addressing this challenge through MoniQA (**M**onitoring and **Q**uality **A**ssurance in the Food Supply Chain), which is funded by the EU's Sixth Framework Programme on Research and Development (FP6).

MoniQA is working towards the harmonisation of monitoring and control strategies for food quality and safety assessment, where traditional analytical methods meet new and rapid technologies. The project brings together over 100 institutions (core partners, advisory panel, and associated partners) from 35 countries and 5 continents. Members are coordinating their research as well as sharing personnel and infrastructures. By creating a virtual laboratory for research, establishing joint training and mobility programs, and sharing knowledge, MoniQA will help to ensure food safety and quality in Europe and beyond. MoniQA will thus benefit the food industry – including SMEs – as well as policy makers and, ultimately, the European consumer.

MoniQA started on 1st February 2007 and is funded by the European Union for duration of five years. In a recent review on behalf of the European Commission independent experts concluded that the project has fully achieved its objectives and technical goals for the period and has even exceeded expectations. In MoniQA's second year we are continuing our work in the same spirit. The MoniQA working groups are currently in the process of drawing up position papers and we have continued and enlarged our mobility and exchange programme. Work also continues on the development of a database for food safety hazards and on the socio-economic impact.

MoniQA in a nutshell:

- Over 400 scientists from 35 countries
- Harmonising global food quality and safety monitoring strategies
- Adding value to the food chain to ensure consumer confidence
- Ensuring effective and efficient food quality and safety regulations within the EU and worldwide

**For further information please take a look at the MoniQA website
(www.moniqa.org) or contact:**

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