



newsletter



(from left to right):
Henk Aarts, Shaun Kennedy
(judge), Beate Skånseng,
Mansel Griffiths (judge) and
George Walcher. Panos
Skandamis, host of the
meeting from the Agricultural
University of Athens, can be
seen in the background.

Three Posters Receive Awards at the BIOTRACER General Meeting in Athens

At the first General Meeting of the BIOTRACER Integrated Project, held in Athens, Greece, 14—16 November 2007, three posters were named the best out of the almost 40 posters presented. The winners were

- 'Use of EMA-PCR and direct sequencing for detection of viable and dead cells in mixed samples'
⇒ Beate Skånseng, Monika Zimonja, Signe Drømtorp and Knut Rudi
- 'CBD bead-based detection and quantification of *Listeria monocytogenes* from raw milk'
⇒ George Walcher, Beatrix Steszl, Martin Wagner and Inge Hein

- 'The development of a microarray procedure for the detection and characterization of *Salmonella*'
⇒ Henk Aarts, Pieter Vos, Stephan Huehn, Jonas Larsson and Burkhard Malorny

Shaun Kennedy of the National Center for Food Protection and Defence and Mansel Griffiths of the University of Guelph were the judges for the competition. They found that the winning posters had novelty in science, technical clarity and good presentation.

BIOTRACER Project

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Important Deadlines!

Activity/scientific reporting

12 January 2008

Work Package leaders send revised Periodic Activity Report to Kristina Kropil.

Management/financial reporting

15 January 2008

Cost justifications must be entered in BAL.PM.

15 January 2008

Personnel and non-personnel costs entered into BAL.PM.

1 February 2008

Form C (stamped and signed) must be received by Project Office electronically (with hardcopy following), and if required, an audit certificate.

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Listeria Traced throughout Europe



Jenny Schelin, LUND,
Partner #4



Kieran Jordan, TEAGASC,
Partner #30

The foodborne pathogen *Listeria monocytogenes* is of continuous major interest to the dairy industry, especially to smaller/local/rural farmhouse cheese producing plants. The Zoonoses Report (2005) of The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) listed 1439 cases of Listeriosis in Europe, an incidence of 0.3 cases per 100,000. Although human infections are rare, they are important due to the high mortality rate associated with them. Especially affected are the very young or elderly, pregnant women and immuno-compromised persons.

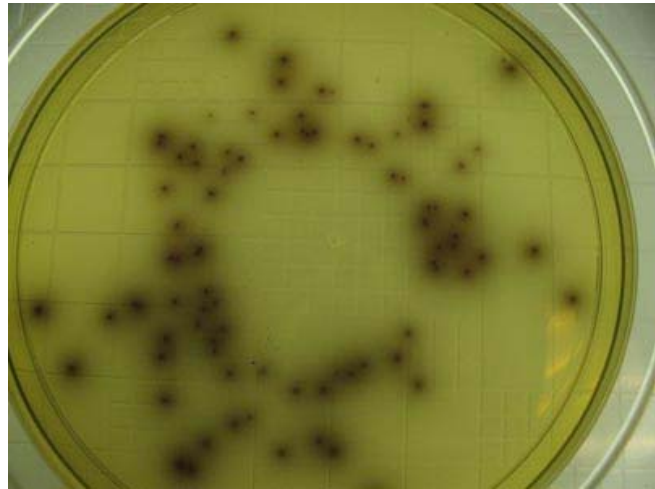
What is it?

L. monocytogenes is common in the environment, especially in plant matter and soil and can contaminate food at many critical points during processing of dairy products. Although it is killed by pasteurization, it

can survive and grow at refrigeration temperatures.

Farmhouse cheeses are made throughout Europe and are among the dairy products most at risk from contamination with *L. monocytogenes*, especially those made from unpasteurized milk or smear and surface ripened cheeses.

months samples such as incoming raw material, end products, soil collected from different altitudes and of the environment both at farm and factory level will be collected and analysed for *L. monocytogenes* and other hygiene indicators. Using techniques such as serotyping, PFGE and FTIR, isolates will be compared. Biofilm



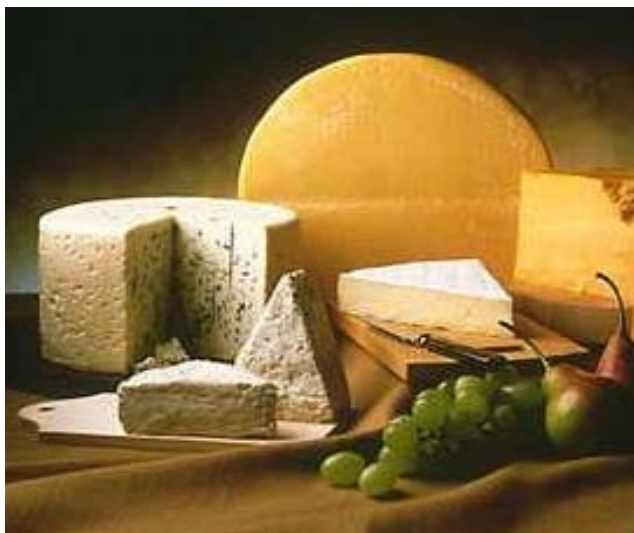
While cheeses are sampled for the occurrence of *L. monocytogenes* under EU regulations, the cheese making facilities and environments are not. This has resulted in large gaps in knowledge concerning the occurrence of this pathogen.

How does BIOTRACER fit in?

Four European countries, Austria, Czech Republic, Greece and Ireland are presently sampling for *L. monocytogenes* at regular intervals according to defined sampling schemes set within the BIOTRACER project. For a period of at least 12

formation, persistence, growth and survival are among the physiological characteristics that will also be studied. The data obtained will be used in efforts to develop mathematical models.

The joint European effort within BIOTRACER to identify and model sources, persistence and survival characteristics of *L. monocytogenes* in Farmhouse cheese products and environments will provide valuable and new knowledge for improved food safety.



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Prevention of *Salmonella* contamination and spread in feed workshop— An open discussion among partners

29 November 2007
Freie Universität Berlin,
Germany

The workshop 'Prevention of *Salmonella* contamination and spread in feed' was organised in the framework of BIOTRACER, Research Area 2, by Per Häggblom and Jürgen Zentek.

Animal feed is at the beginning of the food chain and generally less attention has been paid to feed contamination compared with food contamination.

Topics

The topics included an overview of the European *Salmonella* situation in feed and food by the European Food Safety Agency and the views of the European feed industry on hygienic problems with emphasis on *Salmonella*.

Methods and Strategies

The presentations gave an overview of current methods and strategies used in the feed industry to minimise *Salmonella* contamination and spread. It could be demonstrated that the feed industry has made considerable efforts and progress in the last few years. The presentation of current methods and strategies used in the food industry to avoid



Salmonella contamination and spread stimulated discussions on future developments that might increase feed safety. Future activities have to be directed to control *Salmonella* contamination of raw materials, independently whether imported or of local origin, and recontamination during the production process. Transport was highlighted as well as the hygienic situation in farms.

Tracing Tools

Tracing tools for *Salmonella* were presented, including the molecular tracing tools for future use for *Salmonella* in feed industry. Technical aspects of decontamination during the production process in the feed industry were discussed because this will remain an important topic in the future to provide raw materials and compound

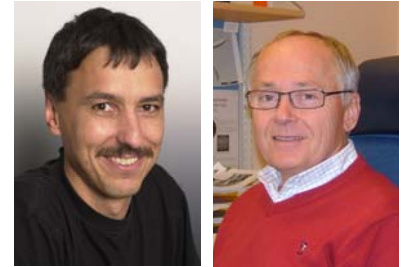
feed of high hygienic quality.

Small Group Discussions

Afternoon discussions in small groups on specific problems, for instance, with raw materials and ingredients, highlighted the importance of sampling and the need for quick and reliable analytical procedures.

Wrap-up

The meeting was stimulating and the discussions between the different stakeholders from the European Food Safety Agency, feed industry, academic institutions and BIOTRACER partners provided a lot of ideas for future BIOTRACER activities.



Jürgen Zentek of Freie Universität Berlin, is the host of the workshop, and Per Häggblom of the National Veterinary Institute (Sweden) is a workshop developer.

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New Gender Action Representative Named



Sol Schwartzman has been named the BIOTRACER Gender Action Representative.

Sol Schwartzman was born in Argentina and has lived in Egypt, Spain and Belgium and is currently living in Ireland. She is a PhD student at TEAGASC, where the topic of her study is Modelling *Listeria* in Cheese.

She has accepted the role of Gender Action Plan Representative because she feels very strongly about the issue of women's equity in scientific fields.

The past has shown that women have been treated differently not only in society, but in working environments as well. She feels that continued effort is necessary to carry out further improvements in gender issues, especially in the scientific fields. Sol believes in the need of a Gender Issues Observatory in every organization and in an Action Plan that has to work from the local to the global.

The aim of the Gender Action Plan is to ensure equality of opportunities for everyone and to encourage women to participate thoroughly at any level within the project. Sol will champion this effort, but knows she cannot do it alone. She will look to her fellow BIOTRACER participants to share ideas, give support, and take action to ensure that our Gender Action Plan is robust, active and an integral part of the project.

Sol.Schwartzman
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Glancing Back, and Looking Forward

2007 has been a busy first year for BIOTRACER:

establishment of the Project Office, three major meetings in Austria and Greece, many Work Package meetings, implementation of e-management tool, and many other activities. The hard work of almost 150 scientists and technical staff involved has created a creative and fruitful network, and nonetheless, a friendly and relaxed atmosphere! It already feels like we have known each other for some years.

BIOTRACER is a toolbox project, aiming at creating better laboratory tools and predictive models.

It became clear from the very first meeting that the main challenge is to link laboratory workers with modellers and create a mutual understanding of each others concepts and ways of tackling food safety. I think there is general impression of all of us that the most important outcome of the first year is that we have succeeded in creating this common understanding, which is the prerequisite of work to be done in the coming years.

2008 will be the year that we move toward the full integration of lab tools, sampling methods and mathematical models in order to create quantitative and molecular-based data

for "next-generation" risk assessments.

Another challenge of 2008 will be closer collaboration with our industrial partners, both with regard to food chains, but also the implementation of technologies, demonstration plans and patenting. The Industry Group will here have a major role to play.

Thank you all for your hard work and excellent contributions, and I wish you the warmest of Season's Greetings and continued collaboration in 2008.

Happy New Year!

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BIOTRACER Project

Mark Your Calendars!

- Microarray innovation workshop, 22—23 January 2008, Copenhagen, Denmark
- Genotyping workshop, 4—5 February 2008, Bern, Switzerland
- Database workshop for industry, 19—20 February 2008, Norwich, UK
- EC Review, 11—12 March 2008, Pre-meeting, 9—10 March 2008, Prague, Czech Republic
- General Meeting, 2—4 July 2008, Dublin, Ireland
- BIOTRACER Ph.D. course, **POSTPONED until 2009**, Copenhagen, Denmark

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Jeffrey Hoorfar is the Coordinator for BIOTRACER.

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