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The German National Reference Center for Food Authenticity

Bertrand Matthäus

Max Rubner-Institut, Federal Research Institute of Nutrition and Food, Department of Safety and Quality of Cereals, Schützenberg 12, 32756 Detmold, Germany

In May 2017 the German Minister for Food and Agriculture announced the establishment of a National Reference Center for Food Authenticity and commissioned the Max Rubner-Institut with the implementation. This is in accordance with regulation (EU) 2017/625 from March 15th, 2017 on official controls and other official activities defining the need for National Reference Centers in EU member states with the aim to provide knowledge and to develop specific methods for the detection of food fraud. The main motivation for establishing this National Reference Center was improving the possibilities of official laboratories for avoiding adulteration of food. Within the top ten products affected by food fraud olive oil is ranging on position two and the main reason for counterfeiting of olive oil is profit maximization, unsatisfied market demands and difficulties in detection and proof. The most important types of food fraud are incorrect declaration of processing, wrong labeling of variety or species and green processing as well as the use of not labelled or forbidden additives.

The aim of the National Reference Center for Food authenticity in Germany is to establish and maintain a network of official and other organizations working on the avoidance of food fraud. The National Reference Center should enable official laboratories easy access to available and reliable information as well as research results, new techniques and knowledge for detecting criminal falsification of food.

The Max Rubner-Institut (MRI) is belonging to the German Ministry for Food and Agriculture and advising the Ministry in questions regarding Food and Nutrition. In this context the MRI has long experiences in developing methods for the avoidance of food fraud in different kinds of products, a high competence in knowledge and information management, but also in the organization of ring tests and the sensory evaluation of food with trained panels.

For the implementation of the National Reference Center over a period of five to ten years a modular approach in five successive steps is planned. Currently phase 1 is running with comprehensive preliminary work including the implementation of the organizational structure and the basic conditions. Additionally the identification of partners and the identification and prioritizations of the most important subject areas in a priority list are on the current to do list.

The present lecture gives some background information on the National Reference Center with focus on olive oil, explains the structure and the further steps on the way to the final National Reference Center.