

Editorial

DOI: 10.1111/j.1757-837X.2010.00071.x

In this issue we include a report from the Second International MoniQA Conference held in Krakow, Poland, in June this year. Although *Quality Assurance of Crops and Foods* is the official journal of the ICC there has always been a close relationship between the two organizations and the support of MoniQA in this publication and its associated Editorial Board has been and will continue to be very welcome.

The partnership between the ICC and MoniQA is a strong one which covers crops and foods. Fundamental to both parties are the needs and desires to be involved in the production of safe and wholesome foods. To achieve such aims we need to have the means of assuring the quality and safety of the raw materials and final products concerned and so both parties have a significant interest in the development and use of appropriate, reliable and trusted testing methods. The 2nd International MoniQA conference provided the perfect platform for world experts from the crop processing, food manufacturing and analytical worlds to meet and exchange views on what has been, is and will be important in delivering safe and wholesome food to consumers around the world.

As a 'veteran' scientific conference attendee, there is always the question in my mind 'Will I learn anything of value from going to this particular conference?' I hope that when I attend such meetings I will always come away enriched with new, valuable information and so it proved to be the case yet again at this meeting.

One theme which I came away with on this occasion was the importance of 'trust'. This includes trust in the appropriateness of the analytical method and trust in the reliability of the data that you get from the test. From the scientific perspective we can make a judgement on such issues, usually through the application of statistics, ring-tests and validation exercises but such things mean nothing to the average consumer so where does their trust come from?

The competition for consumer trust is fierce and so commercial companies have to be very confident that the quality testing that they carry out is 'as good as it gets'. So many consumers get their 'food facts' from the popular media very quickly these days and many reports that they read do not receive any credible scientific scrutiny. This means that dealing with any food quality crisis requires some very quick thinking and even quicker action. In the conference the case study of dioxins in Irish meat products provided a model which many others would do well to follow not only in how the Irish government quickly limited the risks to consumers but also as how to deal with the media storm which inevitably followed.

For the Irish government to manage this particular crisis they had to have trust in their expert advisors who in turn, had to have trust in the scientists providing the relevant information on which to base critical decisions. At the heart of that trust is the testing method and it was many issues associated with the reliability and applicability of testing methods that were addressed at the conference.

Providing reliable testing methods will remain a function of MoniQA partners and ICC for many years to come. In the case of ICC approved methods, many of these are associated with the processing and sensory qualities of grains and cereal-based foods. Once you have the means of providing safe food then the processor requirements for raw materials and consumer requirements for the 'right' quality quite naturally follow and that is precisely why the ICC-MoniQA relationship is such a powerful one, long may it continue.

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