

Editorial

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In English there is a saying that 'Variety is the spice of life'. This 'variety' can be applied to many different aspects of life including our lifestyles, our eating and our drinking habits.

In QAS the variety comes from a number of sources. There is the inevitable variety, which comes from different authors working in different parts of the world but what I find 'spicy' is the variety of research work that is carried out and written up. I suppose that I should not be surprised at the variety of work being carried out given the wide range of foods and feeds used for human and animal consumption. In all cases the twin necessities for providing safe food of the appropriate quality are paramount.

One of the major challenges for the food producer is that while ensuring the safety of foods there may well be a compromise where quality is concerned. There are numerous examples where this difficult balance has to be achieved on a regular, even daily basis. One example that I always quote is the need to store ready-prepared sandwiches at temperatures below 8 °C. Very sensible in terms of limiting bacterial growth but not so good for the quality of the bread used in the sandwich because the range of storage temperatures used means keeping the bread in conditions approaching the maximum staling rate. The introduction of the appropriate legislation for storing sandwiches certainly brought about a change in product quality, which required adjustment of bread formulations to reduce the adverse impact on the sensory properties of the bread slices. This and other examples illustrate the need for holistic approaches to ensuring the safety of food while delivering the relevant quality. This holistic approach needs to embrace legislators, analysts, technologists, producers and consumers to limit the risks associated with particular foods.

We have to recognise that in many (if not most cases) 'zero-risk' is just not achievable. We can develop ever more sensitive testing methods for many of the chemicals and organisms of concern but we will always be faced with the relevance of a given sample both in terms of the way in which samples are taken and the question as to how relevant the sampling method is. To ensure 100% safety we would have to do 100% sampling and testing – hardly a practical proposition if we are to have food to eat. If there is one area that we as food scientists have still to reconcile the needs of all interested parties then sampling is it.

We commonly face a variety of attitudes and legislation regarding what is acceptable for use in the production of food. A populist anti-GMO view prevails throughout the EU while large parts of the food-producing world take a less rigid stance to including them in the agricultural chain. Such rigid stances are often not based on any evidence other than that regurgitated by the popular press in a simplistic form for the average consumer. However, we food scientists are not without our flaws, one of which is that we do not always agree on what constitutes safe food and what does not. We need to send clear and constructive messages to legislators and producers which can be used to safeguard our food and to help them in the 'translation' of our work for assimilation by consumers around the world. We need to keep communicating but remember who our audience is and adjust our messages accordingly. This does not mean that we must sacrifice our scientific reputations but if we are to achieve scientific credibility with consumers then we need to speak their language as well as our own.

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With the publication of Issue 1 of Volume 3 we are pleased to announce that QAS has been selected for coverage in Thomson Reuters products and services. Beginning with Volume 1, issue 1 (2009) QAS will be indexed and abstracted in:

- ◆ Science Citation Index Expanded (also known as SciSearch®)
- ◆ Journal Citation Reports/Science Edition
- ◆ Current Contents®/Agriculture, Biology, and Environmental

The evaluation was carried out by ISI independently of an application from the QAS Editorial team and is a positive reflection of the high quality of submissions by authors, the work of reviewers, and the editorial and production teams. As coverage will begin with volume 1 (2009), QAS should have a 1-year Impact Factor in the 2010 JCR. We certainly hope that a full Impact Factor will follow in due course.

Starting a new journal is always a bit of a 'leap in the dark' and it takes a lot of time and effort by a lot of people. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved from the original concept to the reality of launch and subsequent publication. It has been a splendid team effort so far and we aim to continue delivering a high-class publication.

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