

Advice 22-2008 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC: prioritisation of food-borne zoonoses

An efficient food safety policy requires focusing on the most relevant hazards for the food chain. In order to get a better notion on the importance of the several food-borne zoonoses in Belgium, the Scientific Committee developed an evidence-based semi-quantitative methodology in order to prioritize an extended list of food- and water-borne zoonoses. This prioritisation is based on scores given by 35 scientific experts to five criteria in a broad list of 51 zoonotic agents. These criteria concern public health (gravity and incidence in humans), animal health (gravity coupled with economical consequences for the sector, and incidence) and food (incidence). The scoring by the experts is standardised ("evidence-based") as they all had access to a same set of validated national data related to the five criteria. Independently, the importance of the five criteria was weighted by 7 food chain risk managers. After ranking of the zoonotic agents based on overall weighted scores and grouping them in four statistically different groups of importance, it appeared that the most important food-borne zoonotic pathogens in Belgium are *Salmonella* spp., *Campylobacter* spp., *Listeria monocytogenes* and verocytotoxigenic *Escherichia coli*. A second group of significant importance includes *Toxoplasma gondii*, the agent of the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), *Clostridium botulinum*, *Cryptosporidium parvum*, *Mycobacterium bovis*, *Echinococcus granulosus* and *multilocularis*, *Yersinia enterocolitica*, *Fasciola hepatica* and *Giardia intestinalis*. The methodology was developed to support food safety policy makers to establish the multi-annual monitoring programme of food-borne zoonoses. Recommendations for the monitoring plan of the FASFC are provided in this opinion. The method also enables to identify knowledge gaps and key scientific research questions.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french, respectively under the section "Wetenschappelijk Comité/Adviezen" and "Comité scientifique/Avis".