Assessment of the current situation and future perspectives: improving meat hygiene through decontamination?

Report on the 12th BfR forum on consumer protection held on 4 and 5 June 2012

The consumption of food contaminated with *Campylobacter*, salmonella or other germs can lead to illness. Despite strict hygiene measures and controls in the manufacture and trade of food, such contamination cannot be prevented under all circumstances. Against this background, the European Union has, as an additional hygiene measure, discussed so-called “decontamination” of food, especially meet, with chemical and physical methods.

So far, chemical processes are currently not permitted in the EU[1]. However, in some member states, food, for example spices, are treated with ionising radiation in order to preserve them and to reduce the number of germs.

On the occasion of the 12th BfR forum on consumer protection, participants from the worlds of science, business, politics and from consumer protection organisations discussed the advantages and disadvantages of decontamination procedures as a measure of food hygiene in meet production. The participants agreed that such procedures cannot be a substitute for a comprehensive approach to food hygiene covering all stages of production and trade down to the level of private households. If decontamination procedures are used as complementary measures, the safety of the substances used would have to be ensured.

The following report on the event summarises the current state of knowledge on the application and efficiency of decontamination procedures.

The full version of the Report in German is available on http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/standortbestimmung-und-perspektiven-verbesserungen-der-fleischhygiene-durch-dekontamination.pdf

[1] According to announcements issued by the European Commission, lactic acid will be approved as a means of removing surface contamination from slaughtered cattle, probably in the first quarter of 2013.