

PERSONNEL



“We discuss things that are part of something bigger”

Dr. Tanja Schwerdtle has been Professor of Food Chemistry at the German Institute of Human Nutrition at the University of Potsdam since 2013, the year she also became a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the BfR. In August 2017, the members of the Board unanimously elected her to the position of Chairperson.

Ms. Schwerdtle, why does a departmental research establishment like the BfR need a Scientific Advisory Board in the first place?

Our view as members of this body is that an advisory board should be there to externally mirror the performance and the strategy of the BfR. We also advise the BfR on its scientific and specialist focus, in particular with regard to long and medium-term strategy and in connection with cooperation projects with research establishments in Germany and abroad. We can provide support in areas such as joint appointments, for example, or by discussing critical issues with other risk assessment entities.

What are the concrete tasks of the Advisory Board?

The Advisory Board is currently working on the implementation of some of the recommendations of the German Council of Science and Humanities, who evaluated the BfR in 2015. One of the recommendations is to strengthen the BfR’s risk communication activities. We are currently discussing

various strategies for the effective implementation of this recommendation with the management of the BfR.

Based on your experience to date, how would you say the work of the Advisory Board impacts the development of the BfR?

In both of the terms during which I had the privilege of serving on the Advisory Board, the BfR profited from our support during the inspection by the German Science Council. Professor Schäfer-Korting, the former Chairwoman of the Advisory Board, and I discussed various matters with the members of the Council, and I think this was helpful. Moreover, during the last two periods in office, numerous members of the Advisory Board have provided excellent advice to the BfR on the fostering of young talents and improving research performance.

How do you benefit personally from your involvement?

On the interdisciplinary Advisory Board, I can engage in a very high standard of discussion regarding matters that don’t really concern my own work directly but that are part of something bigger. It’s fun to see things from different points of view and then to arrive at a common perspective that supports the BfR. It’s enjoyable to work on these kinds of things outside my day-to-day job routines.

EVENTS



All fake?

On 15 November 2018, the BfR is hosting a stakeholder conference at the Kaiserin-Friedrich-Hörsaal in Berlin on the topic “Is it fake? Science in the age of multiple truths”. Prominent speakers from the world of science, politics, the media and NGOs will be discussing scientific facts and perceived truths. Attendance at the event is free of charge.

More information: on this and other BfR events at the website of the BfR Academy: www.bfr-akademie.de

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

International guests at the BfR

This year, delegations from Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Myanmar and Sweden visited the BfR with the objective to promote international cooperation and scientific exchange. With the Japanese Minister for Consumer Protection and Food Safety, Teru Fukui, and his ten-strong delegation, for example, the BfR discussed the application of new Omics methods for the analysis of complex biological samples as well as the use of modern techniques for the tracing of suspicious foods along the product chain.

Science gateway to Africa

In March, a three-day workshop organized by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Nairobi, Kenya, attended by the BfR, the Freie Universität Berlin and the Friedrich Loeffler Institute took place to initiate future cooperation between Africa and Europe. The ILRI conducts research on the management of livestock animals with the aims of improving food safety and reducing poverty in Africa. The workshop focused on strategies to deal with foodborne diseases and antimicrobial resistance.

Summer Academy in Uruguay

During a one-week Summer Academy in Montevideo, the BfR informed and trained 40 researchers from Uruguay in the field of official risk assessment in Germany and Europe on behalf of Germany's Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL). Uruguay intends to create structures in

the field of risk assessment that closely resemble our system in Germany. The BfR and the Uruguayan Ministry of Agriculture have been cooperation partners since 2014.



Commitment in Portuguese-speaking countries

In spring, the BfR organised a two-day workshop in the capital city of Cap Verde (Cabo Verde) for attendees from the island itself, Angola, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. The workshop focused on approaches dealing with disease outbreaks caused by pathogens in and on food. The BfR has had cooperation agreements with some of the aforementioned countries for a number of years now to intensify scientific exchange. In February, the BfR published an almanac on food safety for the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP).

More information:

www.bfr.bund.de/en > The Institute > Co-operation

UP-AND-COMING TALENTS

Wide-ranging support for doctoral candidates

Junior researchers who complete their doctorate at the BfR benefit from a high-quality advancement programme. The doctoral candidates not only conduct research into topical and applied subjects with the help of state-of-the-art technical equipment; they also undergo an accompanying further training and development programme to improve their specialist and non-specialist skills. This doctoral training programme is divided into five modules that can be compiled flexibly. The doctoral training programme at the BfR comprises not just the further training programme but also a supervisory

agreement that guarantees specialist assistance during the three-year doctoral phase. Depending on core areas of research and the volume of acquired third-party funding, the BfR advertises around 20 positions for doctoral candidates every year. The dissertation project itself is registered at a university, and the BfR signs the employment contract. You can also find information on vacant doctoral positions on the BfR website.

More information:

www.bfr.bund.de > Job advertisements
www.bfr.bund.de > Research > Support for junior scientists