

Better assessment of pesticide residues with digital tools

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On 17 September 2019, a workshop was held for cooperation on the usage of digital tools and IT applications for the health assessment of pesticide residues and the derivation of maximum residue levels at the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR). 14 experts from the BfR and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) took part. The aim was to exchange experiences from both institutions in the use of digital tools, such as databases or programmes for the evaluation of scientific studies. This included the possibility of an advanced collaboration between EFSA and the BfR in the field of digital tool usage.

RUEDIS (RückstandsDatenInformationsSystem, German for Residue Data Information System), the database developed by the BfR, was introduced. RUEDIS contains detailed results of residue and processing trials on the active substances contained in plant protection products, and are used by the BfR to assess the health risks of pesticide residues in food. EFSA experts were very interested in testing the database to see how it could be used at a European level. Together with the BfR, it should be further developed and refined, so that it can fully meet its potential as an instrument for scientific assessment and cooperation. EFSA emphasised the importance of a BfR pilot project with applicants concerning the electronic submission of residue data from residue trials in machine-readable format according to the OECD Harmonized Template published in 2018. It was also discussed whether (and how) this database could be expanded to be a tool that authorities in all EU member states could use.

The second focus of the workshop was the use of existing data collections for processing factors in residue assessment. The workshop considered the requirements that must be met in order to merge existing BfR and EFSA data collections for processing factors into a joint harmonised European database and to keep this updated in the long term. The experts at both institutions agree that such a tool would be incredibly useful to refine the risk assessment of residues throughout the European Union. Data gaps within the processing factors were identified as a crucial factor for uncertainties within the cumulative assessment of residues of different active substances within plant protection products in food. The BfR and EFSA want to approach this challenge together in the future as a high priority. The results of the workshop were presented at the EFSA Advisory Forum in Helsinki on 18 September 2019.

Further information on this subject on the BfR website:

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/349/bfr-data-collection-on-processing-factors.pdf>

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/bfr-datensammlung-zu-verarbeitungsfaktoren-fliessschemaschemata.pdf> (in German)

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/349/what-does-the-future-hold-for-harmonised-human-health-risk-assessment-of-plant-protection-products.pdf>

https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/a-z_index/plant_protection_products-130188.html



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About the BfR

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is a scientifically independent institution within the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in Germany. It advises the Federal Government and Federal Laender on questions of food, chemical and product safety. The BfR conducts its own research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.

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