

BfR MEAL Study: BfR intensifying cooperation with Republic of Korea

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Within the scope of the BfR MEAL Study, the first total diet study in Germany, the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) and the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) are to further intensify their cooperation. A delegation from the MFDS visited the BfR on 31 May 2018. The objective was to exchange experiences on the conducting of total diet studies (TDS) and reach agreement on the areas in which the two countries can cooperate more closely.

In which quantities do we ingest undesired substances with our food on average? Are certain foods more strongly contaminated than others, and what health effects does the preparation method have on the food? The answers to these questions are provided by total diet studies (TDS). A total diet study is an internationally recognised method to establish average concentrations of substances in foods as consumed. The first total diet study in Germany started in 2015 with the BfR MEAL Study (*Mahlzeiten für die Expositionsschätzung und Analytik von Lebensmitteln* – Meals for the Exposure Estimation and Analysis of Food). The first results are expected at the beginning of 2019. The South Korean MFDS has been conducting total diet studies already since 2000.

The BfR is further expanding its international collaboration with this exchange of experiences.

During the meeting, the BfR and MFDS each presented their total diet studies and discussed the different approaches in the study designs and analysis methods. Regarding the contents, the experts discussed the process contaminants module. As the Republic of Korea has had longer experience of furan analytics, for example, some practical synergy effects could result here for the BfR MEAL Study. The scientists also exchanged ideas and information on the possibilities for linking TDS and monitoring programmes. Another topic was the communication of the results to management authorities and consumers. In this regard, the BfR provided information on the communication measures on the BfR MEAL Study that have been implemented to date.

The South Korean delegation then visited the study kitchen at the BfR location in Alt-Marienfelde, which has been set up especially for the BfR MEAL Study, and in which up to 60,000 foods are to be prepared and homogenised in the coming years. The BfR MEAL Study examines foods for various substances, such as nutrients and heavy metals, as well as additives and process contaminants, in order to establish mean concentrations of these substances in the average human diet. To this end, the BfR MEAL Study takes into account the entire spectrum of foods and analyses each food as typically consumed.

Compared to other TDS, the BfR MEAL Study is one of the most comprehensive in the world with respect to the number of foods examined as well as the number of substances concerned. The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) is sponsoring the BfR MEAL Study, which is scheduled to run for seven years, with roughly 13 million euros. The goal is to be able to better recognise possible food risks for the German population.

More information on the BfR MEAL Study at the BfR website

<http://www.bfr-meal-studie.de/en/meal-homepage.html>

A-Z Index, BfR MEAL Study

http://www.bfr.bund.de/en/a-z_index/bfr_meal_study-197675.html

Frequently asked questions on the BfR MEAL Study

http://bfr.bund.de/en/frequently_asked_questions_on_the_bfr_meal_study-199370.htm

About the BfR

The 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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