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Joint International Symposium
"Global past, present and future challenges in risk assessment 
Strengthening Consumer Health Protection"

# How have Germany and France responded to the crisis with Enterohemorrhagic *E. coli* O104:H4 and what about the future?

### Patrick FACH

The Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (Anses)

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30<sup>th</sup> November -1<sup>st</sup> December 2017, BfR, Berlin, Germany

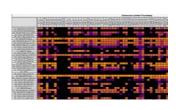


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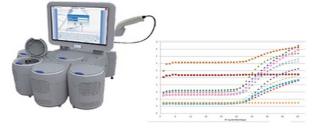






## **GeneDisc Cycler (Pall)**

Gene detection & expression





# **Bravo (Agilent)**

High-throughput analyses, Micro-volume dispenser





### Escherichia coli Virulence factors GeneDisc®



PhD student shared by Anses and BfR (2010-2012)







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Micro-array for the identification of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) seropathotypes associated with Hemorrhagic Colitis and Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome in humans

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#### ABSTRACT

A micro-array has been developed, based on the GeneDisc® array, for the genetic identification of 12 O-types and 7 H-types of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia oii (STEC) including the most clinically relevant enterohemorrhagic E. coli (EHEC) serotypes. The genes selected for determination of the O antigens (TBE<sub>0.15</sub>, WZX<sub>0.03</sub>, WZX<sub>0.13</sub>, WZX<sub>0.03</sub>, WZX<sub>0.03</sub>, WZX<sub>0.03</sub>, WZX<sub>0.03</sub>, WZX<sub>0.03</sub>, WZX<sub>0.04</sub>, MZY<sub>0.03</sub>, WZX<sub>0.04</sub>, MZY<sub>0.03</sub>, WZX<sub>0.04</sub>, MZY<sub>0.03</sub>, WZX<sub>0.04</sub>, MZY<sub>0.03</sub>, WZY<sub>0.04</sub>, MZY<sub>0.04</sub>, MZY<sub>0.04</sub>, MZY<sub>0.05</sub>, and WgRY<sub>0.55</sub>) and H-types (fliChz, fliChz, fliChz, fliGhz, fliGhz, fliGhz, fliGhz), fliGhz, fliGhz

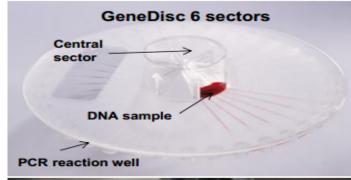
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# E. coli O104:H4 qPCR detection

# **GeneDisc Cycler (Pall)**

# Gene detection, gene expression









Discs with 6, 9 or 12 sectors

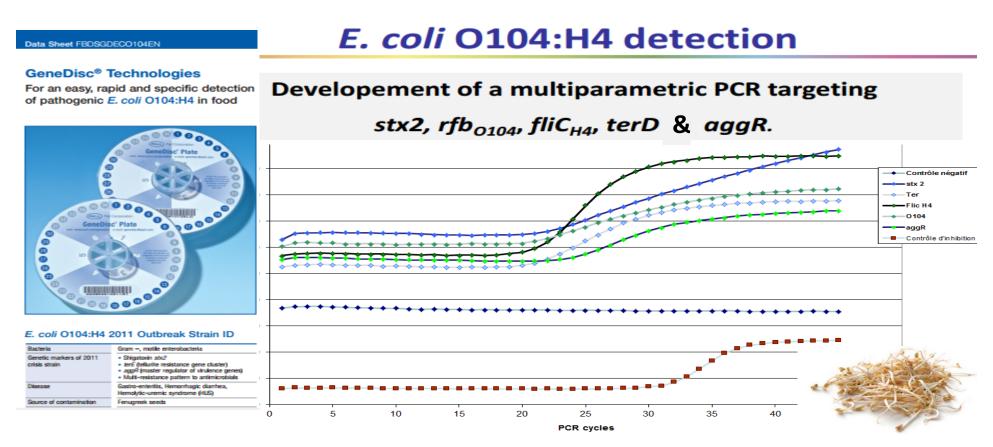
Reaction volume 12 µl

Multiplexing

Very easy to use

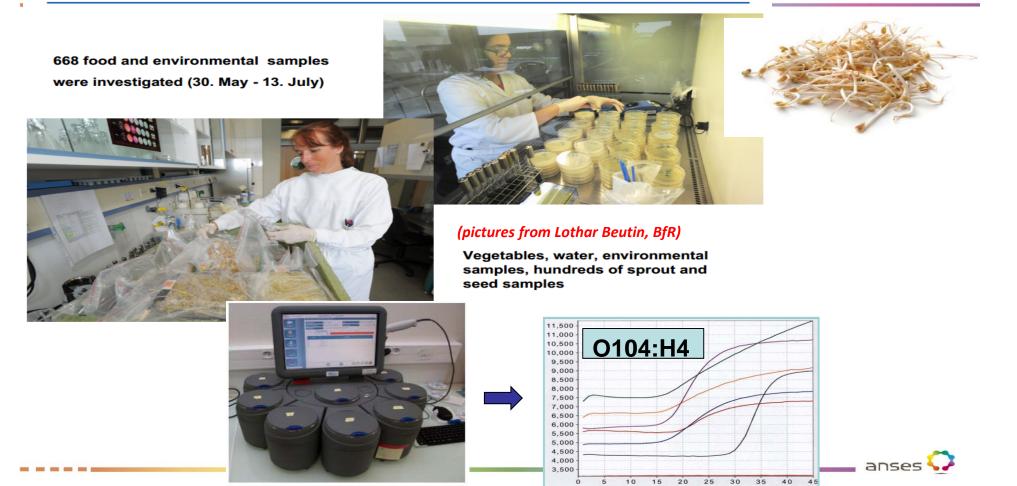
LIMS integration



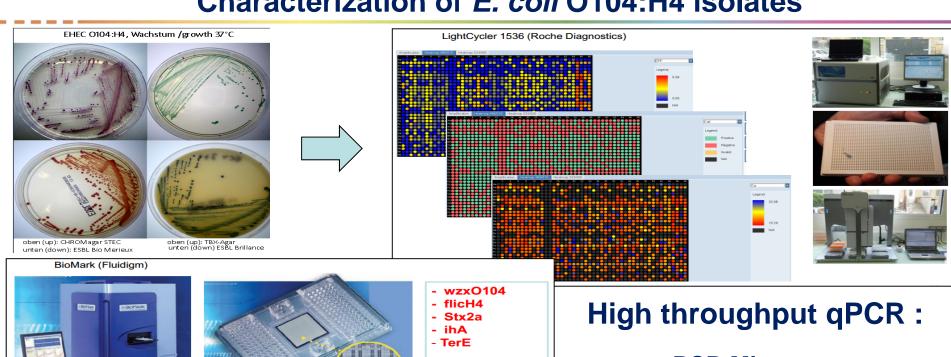


Based on the common work conducted at the **BfR** and **ANSES** this qPCR has been made commercially available within few weeks after the beginning of the crisis

### Outbreak investigations at the NRL for E. coli (BfR)



# Characterization of *E. coli* O104:H4 isolates



# aat - aggR - aggA (AAF/I) 144 other ORFs...

**qPCR Microarray** qPCR on chips

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# Characterization of *E. coli* O104:H4 by high throughput qPCR

		O104:H4 _ 2011	O104:H4 _ 2001
		CB13344	CB8983
stx1	Shiga toxin 1	-	-
stx2	Shiga toxin 2	+	+
vtx2a	Shiga toxin 2a	+	+
WZX 0104	O104 somatic antigen	+	+
fliC H4	H4 flagellar antigen	+	+
aggA	Aggregative adherence fimbriae I (AAF/I)	+	-
agg3A	Aggregative adherence fimbriae III (AAF/III)	-	+
аар	Dispersin	+	+
aatA	ABC-transporter protein (pAA) (pCVD432)	+	+
irp2	Component of iron uptake system on HPI	+	+
fyuA	Component of iron uptake system on HPI	+	+
pic	Pic (protein involved in intestinal colonization)	+	+
set1	Shigella enterotoxin 1	+	+
aggR	Transcriptional regulator AggR	+	+
astA	EAEC heat-stable enterotoxin 1 (EAST1)	-	+
iha	Iha (IrgA homolog adhesin)	+	+
IpfA 0113	Structural subunit of long polar fimbriae (LPF) of STEC 0113	+	+
IpfA O26	Structural subunit of long polar fimbriae (LPF) of STEC O26	+	+
IpfA O157	Structural subunit of long polar fimbriae (LPF) of STEC 0157	-	-
bfpA	Bundle-forming pili	-	-
sfpA	Structural subunit of Sfp fimbriae	-	-
bla <sub>CTX-M15</sub>	Beta-lactams resistance	+	-
bla <sub>TEM-1</sub>	Beta-lactams resistance	+	+
terE	Tellurite resistance	+	+
ureD	Urease UreD	-	-
ehxA	EHEC entero-haemolysin	-	-
espP	Serine protease EspP	-	-
etpD	Type II secretion system	-	-
katP	Catalase / Peroxydase	-	-
saa	Saa (STEC autoagglutinating adhesin)	-	-
■ subA	Subtilase cytotoxin	-	-
toxB	Putative EHEC adhesin	_	-

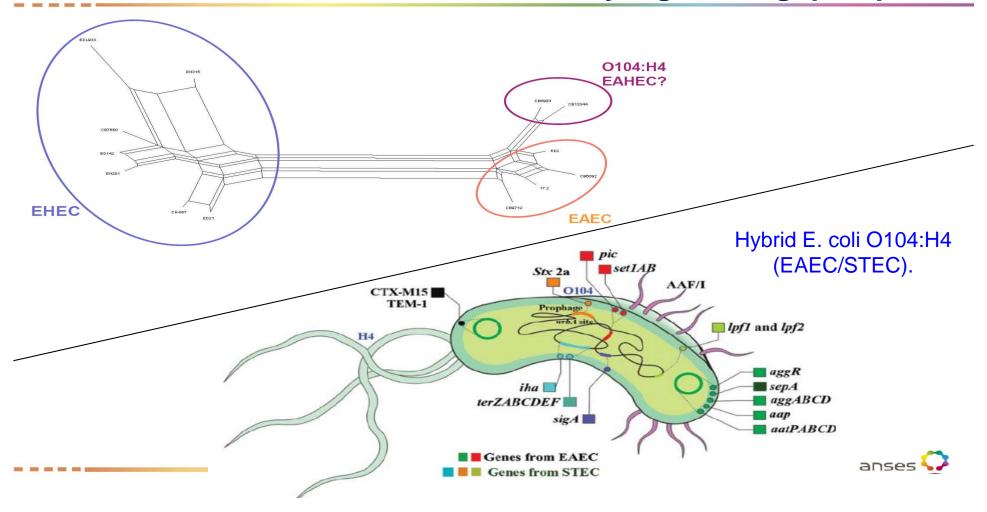


# Characterization of *E. coli* O104:H4 by high throughput qPCR

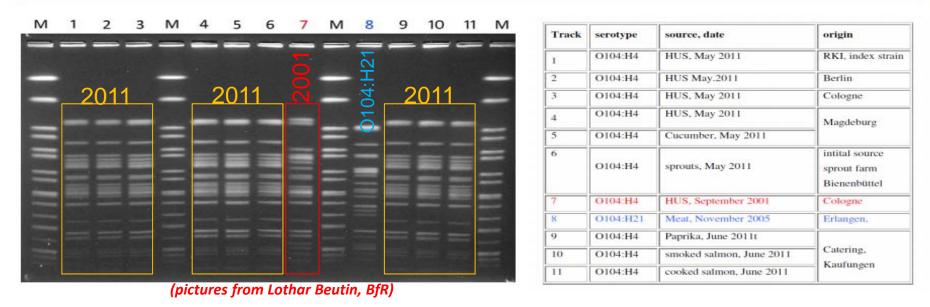
			O104:H4 _ 2011 CB13344	O104:H4 _ 2001 CB8983
ea	ae *	All the ORFs of the LEE have been tested (41 ORFs)	-	-
pa	agC	Type III secreted effector encoded in the genomic islands OI-122	-	-
ef	fa1	Type III secreted effector encoded in the genomic islands OI-122	-	-
ef	fa2	Type III secreted effector encoded in the genomic islands OI-122	-	-
en	nt/espL2	Type III secreted effector encoded in the genomic islands OI-122	-	-
nl	leB	Type III secreted effector encoded in the genomic islands OI-122	-	-
nl	leE	Type III secreted effector encoded in the genomic islands OI-122	-	-
es	spO1-1	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	pК	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	spM1	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	spM2	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	spR1	Type III secreted effector protein	+	+
es	spV	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	spW	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	spX1	Type III secreted effector protein	+	+
es	spX2	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	spX5	Type III secreted effector protein	+	+
es	spX6	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	spX7	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	spY3	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
es	spY4	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
nl	leC	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
nl	leD	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
nl	leF	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
nl	leG	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
nl	leG6-2	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
nl	leG8-2	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
nl	leH1-1	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
ef	fa2	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
= es	spΝ	Type III secreted effector protein	-	-
nl	leG2	Type III secreted effector protein	_	-



# Characterization of *E. coli* O104:H4 by high throughput qPCR



### PFGE profile (Xbal) of human and non-human O104:H4 isolates



All O104:H4 strains from the May/June 2011 outbreak show the same PFGE profiles

The profiles of the first O104:H4 isolate in 2001 (Lane 7) differs from the 2011 outbreak strain, as does an O104:H21 isolate (Lane 8)

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#### Genotypes and virulence characteristics of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli O104 strains from different origins and sources



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#### ABSTRACT







Sixty-two Escherichia coli strains carrying the wzx0104-gene from different sources, origins and time periods were analyzed for their serotypes, virulence genes and compared for genomic similarity by pulsed-field gel-electrophoresis (PFGE). The O104 antigen was present in 55 strains and the structurally and genetically related capsular antigen K9 in five strains. The presence of 49 genes associated with enteropathogenic E. coli (EPEC), enteroaggregative E. coli (EAEC) and enterohemorrhagic E. coli (EHEC) was investigated. Fifty-four strains of serotypes O104:H2 (n=1), O104:H4 (n=37), O104:H7 (n=5) and O104:H21 (n = 11) produced Shiga-toxins (Stx), Among STEC O104, a close association between serotype, virulence gene profile and genomic similarity was found. EAEC virulence genes were only present in STEC O104:H4 strains, EHEC-O157 plasmid-encoded genes were only found in STEC O104:H2, O104:H7 and O104:H21 strains. None of the 62 O104 or K9 strains carried an ege-gene involved in the attaching and

The 38 O104:H4 strains formed a single PFGE-cluster (>83.7% similarity). Thirty-one of these strains were from the European O104:H4 outbreak in 2011. The outbreak strains and older O104:H4 strains from Germany (2001), Georgia and France (2009) clustered together at >86.2% similarity. O104:H4 strains isolated between 2001 and 2009 differed for some plasmid-encoded virulence genes compared to the outbreak strains from 2011.

STEC 0104:H21 and STEC 0104:H7 strains isolated in the U.S. and in Europe showed characteristic differences in their Stx-types, virulence gene and PFGE profiles indicating that these have evolved separately. E. coli K9 strains were not associated with virulence and were heterogeneous for their serotypes and PFGE profiles.

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#### Introduction

Production of Shiga toxins (Stx) is associated with certain strains of Escherichia coli and some Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC) strains can cause severe disease in humans. E. coli strains belonging to the STEC group are phenotypically, genetically and serologically highly diverse. More than 400 serotypes of STEC have been isolated from human patients and even more STEC types were isolated from

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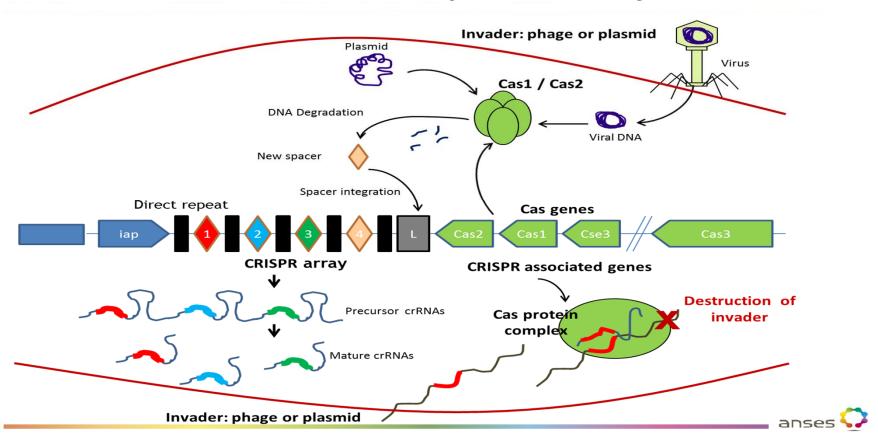
food animals and the environment (Blanco et al. 2001: Hussein 2007: Scheutz and Strockhine, 2005), Many STEC strains are part of the intestinal flora of domestic and wildlife animals, which excrete the bacteria with their feces into the environment (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and European Food Safety Authority, 2011). Food produced from these animals can be contaminated with STEC strains derived from the fecal microbial flora of the producer animal (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and European Food Safety Authority, 2011; Martin and Beutin, 2011). Some, but not all STEC strains are known to have the capacity to cause life-threatening diseases in humans, such as hemorrhagic colitis (HC) and hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) (Melton-Celsa et al., 2012). These STEC strains, which are also called enterohemorrhagic E. coli (EHEC), belong to a few E. coli serotypes, and share similarities in their Stx-types, virulence plasmids and

# **Genotypes and virulence** characteristic of O104:H4 from different origins and sources

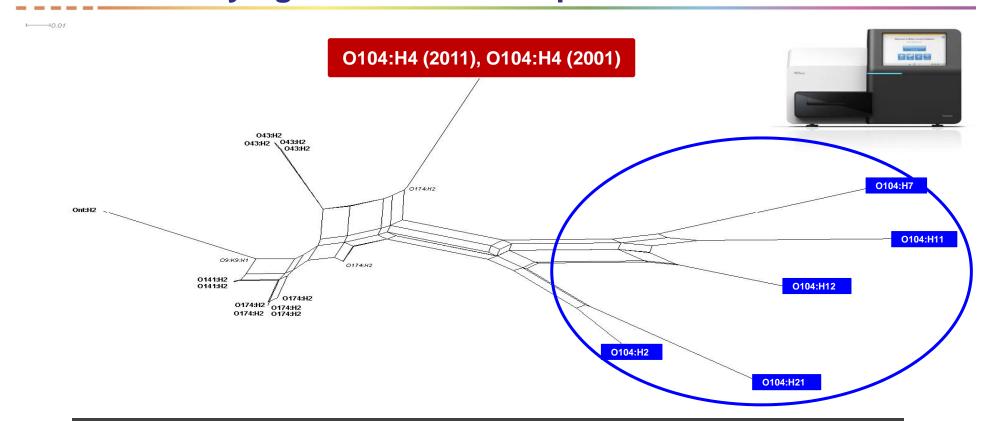
- The EAEC genetic markers were detected only in the outbreak strains.
- The 2011 outbreak strains and older O104:H4 strains from Germany; Georgia France have more than 86% similarities and could be categorized in the same cluster.
- O104:H4 strains isolated between 2001 and 2009 are quite different from the 2011 outbreak strains with regard to their plasmid composition.
- Strains of serotypes O104:H7 O104:H21 isolated in the US or in Europe are really divergent for their stx subtypes, virulence genes and PFGE profile indicating that they have evolved separately from O104:H4.

# CRISPR sequencing of *E. coli* O104:H4

# **CRISPR-mediated adaptive immunity**



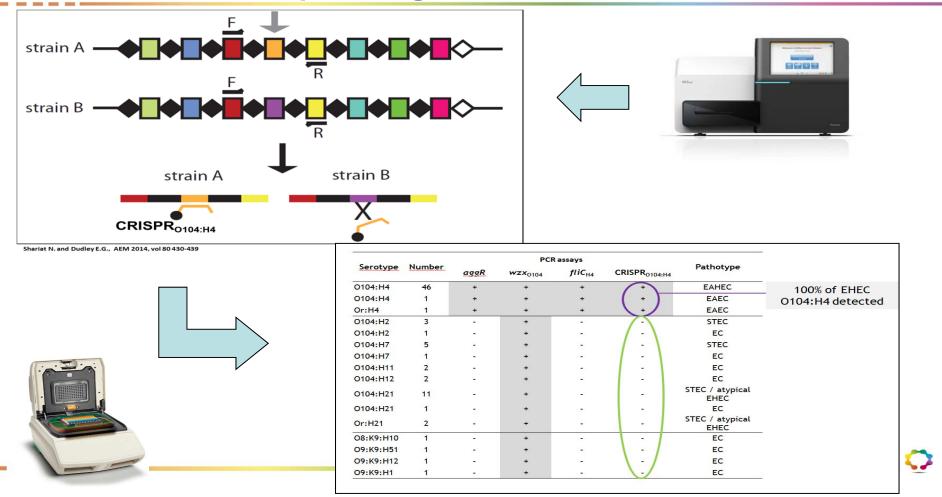
# Phylogenetic relationship of CRISPR loci



Comparison of the CRISPR loci of O104 strains and other strains having similar CRISPR loci.



# CRISPR loci as specific genetic marker of EHEC 0104:H4





#### Specific Detection of Enteroaggregative Hemorrhagic Escherichia coli O104:H4 Strains by Use of the CRISPR Locus as a Target for a Diagnostic Real-Time PCR

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In 2011, a large outbreak of an unusual bacterial strain occurred in Europe. This strain was characterized as a hybrid of an enteroaggregative Escherichia coli (EAEC) and a Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC) strain of the serotype O104:H4. Here, we present a single PCR targeting the clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats locus of E. coli O104:H4 (CRISPR<sub>O104EH4</sub>) for specific detection of EAEC STEC O104:H4 strains from different geographical locations and time periods. The specificity of the CRISPR<sub>O194:H4</sub> PCR was investigated using 1,321 E. coli strains, including reference strains for E. coli O serogroups O1 to O186 and flagellar (H) types H1 to H56. The assay was compared for specificity using PCR assays targeting different O104 antigen-encoding genes (wbwCQ104 wzxQ104) and wzyQ104). The PCR assays reacted with all types of E. coli O104 strains (O104:H4, O104:H4, O104:H7, and O104:H21) and with E. coli O8 and O9 strains carrying the K9 capsular antigen and were therefore not specific for detection of the EAEC STEC O104:H4 type. A single PCR developed for the CRISPR<sub>O104:H4</sub> target was sufficient for specific identification and detection of the 48 tested EAEC STEC O104:H4 strains. The 35 E. coli O104 strains expressing H types other than H4 as well as 8 E. coli strains carrying a K9 capsular antigen tested all negative for the CRISPR<sub>O104:H4</sub> locus. Only 12 (0.94%) of the 1,273 non-O104:H4 E coli strains (serotypes Ont:H2, O43:H2, O141:H2, and O174: H2) reacted positive in the CRISPR<sub>O104:H4</sub> PCR (99.06% specificity).

ore than 400 serotypes of Shiga toxin (Stx)-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) strains have been described as agents of disease in humans, and some of these have been shown to be associated with severe diseases, such as hemorrhagic colitis (HC) and hemolytic-uremic syndrome (HUS). These strains were called enterohemorrhagic E. coli (EHEC) and were found to carry additional virulence markers besides Stx, such as effectors encoded by the locus of enterocyte effacement (LEE) and various non-LEE-encoded effectors. A concept of molecular risk assessment (MRA) was developed by Karmali et al. (13) and Coombes et al. (9) that employs PCR for identification of human-pathogenic EHEC. Using the MRA approach for screening STEC collections (6, 8), an increasing number of emerging EHEC types was detected.

During spring 2011, Europe faced its largest STEC outbreak involving an emerging enterohemorrhagic Escherichia coli O104:H4 strain (1). This EHEC strain presents an unusual virulence pattern that combines the production of Stx2a with enteroaggregative adherence which is encoded by genes of the pAA plasmid and chromosomally carried genes of enteroaggregative E. coli (EAEC) strains (1, 10). This new type of EHEC was designated enteroaggregative hemorrhagic E. coli since it shares virulence markers of both EHEC and EAEC strains. On the genome level (5, 17), the strain was found to be most closely related to an EAEC O104:H4 strain, strain 55989, that was isolated in Central Africa in 1995 (11). This hybrid EAEC STEC O104:H4 strain was found to be negative for the LEE-encoded effector and non-LEE-encoded effector (nle), both of which are presently being used by the current MRA approach to define human virulent EHEC types. Therefore, new diagnostic approaches needed to be developed for detection of EAEC STEC O104:H4 strains. The lack of unique biochemical traits of the hybrid EAEC STEC O104:H4 strains makes their detection with cultural and phenotypical tests difficult and time-consuming. Therefore, rapid molecular testing methods allowing for timely detection of these strains are deemed highly

During the course of the O104:H4 outbreak investigation, multitarget PCR assays have been used for rapid screening of samples; however, all of these assays require cultural isolation of the bacteria to confirm that all gene targets are present in the same strain. The used PCR assays (4, 12, 21, 26) combine multiple pairs of primers targeting, for example, genes encoding Shiga toxin 2 (stx2), O104 (rfbO104) and H4 (fliCH4) antigens, tellurite resistance (terD), and AggR (aggR), which is the master regulator of EAEC plasmid, as well as chromosomally inherited virulence genes (18). However, none of these gene targets was unique to the O104:H4 outbreak strain. Therefore, samples containing a mixed flora of bacteria, such as those collected from environmental and food sources, did not allow prediction that all targets were present in the same bacterial strain. Hence, these assays were suitable only for bacterial isolates and have limited use with clinical, food, or environmental samples.

Based on nucleotide sequence analysis of the genome of EAEC STEC O104:H4, we identified in the clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR) locus of the epidemic

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# **CRISPR** loci as specific genetic marker of EHEC 0104:H4

- Use of CRISPR loci as specific genetic markers for O104:H4 EHEC strains.
- CRISPR real-time PCRs
  - sensitivity estimates: 100%
  - specificity estimates: 99.06%
  - LOD < 6 cfu.reaction-1
- Strains belonging to the same serogroup but with different Htypes tested negative.
- Potential candidate for detection of O104:H4 EHECs in complex matrices such as food samples

Evaluation on spiked and naturally contamined samples.



# What BfR and Anses learned from the O104 outbreak:

- A 'task force' with the BfR (NRL for E. coli) and Anses (IdentyPath Genomic platform) can be set up to rapidly face the outbreak.
- BfR and Anses can join their efforts to rapidly design a real-time PCR test specific for the outbreak strain in case of crisis.
- The method developed can be provided to the other European Member States in only <u>few days</u> and a specific test can be commercially available in <u>less than 2 weeks</u> (Pall GeneDisc) ---> Routine testing and large scale analysis.
- Based on the molecular detection and typing methods (CRISPR, PFGE) newly developed we determined the Genotypes and virulence characteristic of O104:H4 from different origins and sources.
- Importance to anticipate the crisis by developing research projects,
   by exchange of expertise & material and by sharing PhD student



# Many common scientific papers were published by the BfR and Anses after this story:

### 1- Molecular characterization of other *E. coli* serotypes

Feng PCH, **Delannoy S**, Lacher DW, Bosilevac JM, **Fach P**, **Beutin L**. Characterization of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli strains of O91 serogroup isolated from food and environmental samples. Appl Environ Microbiol. 2017 Jul 7. pii: AEM.01231-17.

Miko A, Rivas M, Bentancor A, Delannoy S, Fach P, Beutin L. Emerging types of Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC) O178 present in cattle, deer, and humans from Argentina and Germany. Front Cell Infect Microbiol. 2014 Jun 17;4:78.

Feng PC, Delannoy S, Lacher DW, Dos Santos LF, Beutin L, Fach P, Rivas M, Hartland EL, Paton AW, Guth BE. Genetic diversity and virulence potential of shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli O113:H21 strains isolated from clinical, environmental, and food sources. Appl Environ Microbiol. 2014 Aug;80(15):4757-63.

Piazza RM, Delannoy S, Fach P, Saridakis HO, Pedroso MZ, Rocha LB, Gomes TA, Vieira MA, Beutin L, Guth BE. Molecular and phenotypic characterization of Escherichia coli O26:H8 among diarrheagenic E. coli O26 strains isolated in Brazil. Appl Environ Microbiol. 2013 Nov;79(22):6847-54.



### 2- Sequencing of the CRISPR array of E. coli

**Delannoy S, Beutin L, Fach P.** Improved traceability of Shiga-toxin-producing Escherichia coli using CRISPRs for detection and typing. Environ <u>Sci Pollut</u> Res Int. 2016 May;23(9):8163-74.

Delannoy S, Beutin L, Fach P. Use of clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeat sequence polymorphisms for specific detection of enterohemorrhagic Escherichia coli strains of serotypes O26:H11, O45:H2, O103:H2, O111:H8, O121:H19, O145:H28, and O157:H7 by real-time PCR. J Clin Microbiol. 2012 Dec;50(12):4035-40.

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### 3- Molecular serotyping of *E. coli*: Sequencing the O and H antigen genes

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Beutin L, Delannoy S, Fach P. Genetic Analysis and Detection of fliC H1 and fliC H12 Genes Coding for Serologically Closely Related Flagellar Antigens in Human and Animal Pathogenic Escherichia coli. Front Microbiol. 2016 Feb 15;7:135.

Beutin L, Delannoy S, Fach P. Sequence Variations in the Flagellar Antigen Genes fliCH25 and fliCH28 of Escherichia coli and Their Use in Identification and Characterization of Enterohemorrhagic E. coli (EHEC) O145:H25 and O145:H28. PLoSOne. 2015 May 22;10(5):e0126749.

Beutin L, Delannoy S, Fach P. Genetic Diversity of the fliC Genes Encoding the Flagellar Antigen H19 of Escherichia coli and Application to the Specific Identification of Enterohemorrhagic E. coli O121:H19. Appl Environ Microbiol. 2015 Jun 15;81(12):4224-30.

Miko A, Delannoy S, Fach P, Strockbine NA, Lindstedt BA, Mariani-Kurkdjian P, Reetz J, Beutin L. Genotypes and virulence characteristics of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli O104 strains from different origins and sources. Int J Med Microbiol. 2013 Dec;303(8):410-21.



### 4- Molecular Risk Assessment (MRA)

Delannoy S, Beutin L, Fach P. Discrimination of enterohemorrhagic Escherichia coli (EHEC) from non-EHEC strains based on detection of various combinations of type III effector genes. J Clin Microbiol. 2013 Oct;51(10):3257-62.

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Bugarel M, Beutin L, Scheutz F, Loukiadis E, Fach P. Identification of genetic markers for differentiation of Shiga toxin-producing, enteropathogenic, and avirulent strains of Escherichia coli O26. Appl Environ Microbiol. 2011 Apr;77(7):2275-81.

### 5- A new detection approach for detecting EHEC in food samples

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