

Working Meeting of the Digitalisation Laboratory for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection

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On October 28, the second working meeting of the Digitalisation Laboratory for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (DigiLab-ELV) took place at the headquarters of the Julius Kühn Institute (JKI) in Quedlinburg. Together, the JKI and the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) plan to bundle their digitalisation skills more closely. At the hybrid event, the President of the BfR, Professor Andreas Hensel, and JKI President Professor Frank Ordon, issued an official agreement to tackle digitalisation projects together in the future.

The multi-year pilot project DigiLab-ELV is intended to develop cross-departmental and interdisciplinary information technology (IT) solutions. For this purpose, both institutes updated each other on their current work through a series of lectures touching on deep learning, bio-informatics, and also web applications or open source projects such as the JKI web application CADIMA. During a fully virtual first meeting on August 24, 2021, an overview of the existing skills and experience was created. Ideas for joint projects will be fleshed out in subsequent workshops.

“Both the JKI and BfR enjoy close cooperation in the field of IT,” explains Steffen Kecke, Head of Central Data Processing at the JKI and the contact for DigiLab-ELV. “One example of this collaboration is the approval and evaluation of plant protection products, for which both institutes are working on partial aspects. That is why they are interested in joint digital solutions for data transmission, storage and availability.” The networking between the two institutes is a lighthouse project and paves the way for a cross-agency data infrastructure benefiting the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL). JKI President Professor Frank Ordon adds: “With DigiLab-ELV, we have created a central contact point to answer specific IT application questions for institutes in the portfolio of the BMEL, which will support the ministry in the medium-term.”

In 2018, the BMEL took up the task of becoming a digital reference ministry along with the institutes in its portfolio. “Digitalisation is now an integral part of official tasks and research, but further developments are necessary,” says Professor Andreas Hensel. “Software and data must be developed with a modular structure, be geared to the needs of different users and, of course, be user-friendly.”

“In the future, it is intended to use the results of our cooperation outside the realm of public authorities and institutions, as has already been planned for the research project database or [CADIMA](#),” emphasizes Steffen Kecke. This is based on the law on the provision and use of open-source data.

In order to meet the challenge of implementing the digital system across the entire spectrum of public authorities, the JKI supports the proposed appointment of a DigiLab manager, by the BfR, together with the Hasso Plattner Institute for Digital Engineering. Connections with the University of Potsdam will also enable the unit’s head to acquire both undergraduate and master students, as well as those interested in further qualification, who are able to devote themselves to the sub-projects within the overall mission.

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. The BfR advises the Federal Government and the States ('Laender') on questions of food, chemicals and product safety. The BfR conducts independent research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.

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