

VITAL, Monitoring and Control for Virus Safe Pork

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Abstract

VITAL is an ongoing (2008-2011) EU funded project on monitoring and control of food-borne viruses. The concept of VITAL is the integrated risk assessment and management of contamination of the European farm to market food chain by pathogenic viruses, such as norovirus and hepatitis E virus. The project's focus is on the production and processing phase, moving away from the concept of endpoint monitoring towards input monitoring. The project's objectives include: 1) The acquisition of data on virus contamination of food and environmental sources, 2) The assessment of foodborne viral risks for determining high risk situations and the efficacy of interventions along the food supply chains, 3) To develop new measures to prevent virus contamination of foods and the environment, 4) To develop and assess measures for virus reduction and control in case of virus contamination.

VITAL development and testing of standard operating procedures includes SOPs for the analysis of samples from the pork production chains which are most at risk from foodborne virus contamination, in particular hepatitis E virus. Specific points of sampling along the production chain of pork have been identified and the developed methodology was used to gather data in the various phases of this food supply chain. In addition VITAL works on studies on the survival and elimination of hepatitis E virus in the pork production setting. The data from monitoring of raw as well as processed pork will be used with Modular Process Risk Models (MPRM) to build up specific hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP) recommendations, also using the results of hepatitis E virus survival studies. Measures for virus reduction and control developed and assessed by VITAL must be of value to Europe and beyond and therefore will finally be recommended and published in guidance manuals.