



# BE Bulletin épidémiologique Animal health and nutrition

January 2017/Issue 77

## Special Edition on Food Safety Monitoring

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### EDITORIAL

This special edition is the first issue of the *Bulletin Épidémiologique (BE) - Animal Health - Food* dedicated to an annual review of food safety monitoring. This new *BE* issue presents the organisation and the results of the main surveillance programmes for chemical and biological contaminants that may be found in food.

The contaminants of interest are associated with adverse effects in humans, whether proven or potential, and for which there are surveillance programmes at the national level. Three categories of contaminants are being monitored: contaminants of environmental origin, those related to pesticides and fertilisers used in livestock rearing and agriculture, and those related to a food safety deficiency in food product processing methods. The articles present the basic concepts of epidemiological surveillance in the area of food safety and show the position of all the stakeholders in the process.

For each article, an inset summarises how surveillance is organised and gives the regulatory context. The programmes are described along with a review of the most recent year for which consolidated data are available at the national level; where appropriate, these results are compared with those of previous years.

This special issue of the *BE* is a supplement to the annual reviews published in parallel – specifically the summary sheets issued by the technical units of the French General Directorate for Food, published on the Ministry of Agriculture's website. In fact, the specific task of co-authoring these articles, carried out by the various contributing entities, including government administrations, ANSES, National Reference Laboratories, and agro-industrial technical centres, helps to structure exchanges. This ultimately contributes to optimisation of surveillance activities by developing common technical terminology, sharing and harmonising of objectives, and by promoting exchanges regarding data quality, and the interpretation of results and putting them into perspective in order to assess or manage risks.

This is already a sign of the benefits expected from synergies between the various stakeholders involved in surveillance, some of whom have been identified as potential members of the Food Chain Surveillance Platform, provided for by the new French law on the Future of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

This document also serves as a tool for promotion and communication at the national and international levels. It provides detailed feedback on surveillance programmes and epidemiological data to all the stakeholders in the surveillance process, thus promoting direct involvement in this activity at each stage, from collection through to analysis and interpretation of results (operators, laboratories, and agents in charge of official controls at the local and national levels). These reviews can also be considered as reference data for use at the international level, for example in the context of cross-border trade. In addition, the reviews and analyses presented serve as a basis for risk assessment and management.

Overall, the general level of food quality in France is considered to be very good and is characterised by very low levels of non-compliance. Moreover, the results of monitoring of foodborne illnesses in humans provide indicators of the level of overall control of biological contamination.

The reviews underscore the joint responsibility of the various stakeholders, from the livestock farmer to the final consumer, in characterising and controlling sanitary risks. For all contaminants, a critical analysis of the safety situation, and an assessment of the surveillance and control activities implemented – and their relevance – provide the foundation for safety management, from the local to the national level.

The Editorial Board - BE special Food Safety