

GHI Matters


The newsletter of the Global Harmonization



Message from the President

Dear GHI Colleagues:

Regrettably, I need to start with an apology. This newsletter had been promised two months earlier. Several incidents, or rather accidents, have prevented us from achieving that goal. Consequently, GHI wishes for a healthy, happy and successful 2012 are late, but nevertheless, well meant. The good news is that interest in GHI is growing constantly to the extent that we have difficulty in meeting the invitations to write articles and give presentations. There are also Working Groups, which meet and make progress on different topics, but are led by scientists who do this in addition to their daily duties. They would like to move faster, but there is only so much that can be done. I know that GHI has among its members many young scientists, including PhD students, and I would like to invite them to have a more active role in the GHI Working Groups so that progress can be faster. Apart from helping to solve global food security problems, active participation will also create a useful scientific network with colleagues who you really get to know.

Regarding the Working Groups, in this issue you will find short reports on meetings of the 'WG Mycotoxins' and the 'WG Food safety in relation to religious dietary laws', which both met during the EFFoST Annual Conference in November 2011. You can also read about the 13th Food Regulations and Labeling Standards Conference held in Sydney (Australia, 9-10th November 2011) where four invited speakers, including board members and the GHI Ambassador for Australia, had the opportunity to present GHI and how we may contribute to solving global food safety problems. 

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Achieving consensus on the science of food regulations and legislation to ensure the global availability of safe and wholesome food products for all consumers.

► This year GHI will be at a variety of events including the IUFOST World Food Congress (Iguazu Falls, Brazil), 7th Nutra India Summit (Mysore, India), IFT Annual meeting (Las Vegas, USA), EFFoST's Annual Conference (Montpellier, France), Northern European Food Science and Technology Conference (St Petersburg, Russia), EHEDG Annual meeting (Valencia, Spain) and more ... so, please, watch out for the agendas in this and future newsletters and, of course, www.globalharmonization.net, and participate in the GHI meetings during the events you are attending: the GHI Officers look forward meeting you!

With kind regards,

Huub Lelieveld, President, GHI



GHI meetings and workshops are where the consensus happens!

GHI has legal non-profit entity status and its charter and constitution are registered in Vienna, Austria as the GHI-Association (ZVR453446383).

EHEDG and GHI

The European Hygienic Engineering and Design Group (EHEDG, www.ehedg.org) supports the Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI) by promoting the safe and hygienic production of food. Many of EHEDG experts are also active members of GHI and thus share a common field of interest although EHEDG members focus on engineering and design of equipment, processes and plants in the food industry to assure good hygiene practice in manufacture. EHEDG has developed 41 guidelines on different hygienic engineering and design topics with the aim of making food as safe as possible. EHEDG is a global organisation with more than twenty regional sections incorporating representatives from the food industry, equipment manufacturers, research institutes and universities, and health authorities. Together, EHEDG and GHI are endeavouring to help all sectors to understand the important issues for food safety. Hundreds of regulations and standards, however, make it difficult for manufacturers and users alike. The EHEDG illustrated guides to hygienic equipment manufacturing and related production processes are practical, concise and available in a variety of languages.

The guidelines are also harmonized with 3-A standards despite the local variations in English and technical terminology.

EHEDG is a worldwide growing network of more than 800 experts and comprises regional sections across Europe and overseas that disseminate through local seminars, conferences, training and other events. Equipment certification developed by EHEDG and carried out in various EHEDG test institutes is setting recognized quality standards, which are the goal of manufacturers aiming to design equipment in accordance to the highest hygienic standards. It is important that people in all sectors of the food chain understand one other better, and it is precisely for this reason that EHEDG supports the initiative of global harmonisation.

Piet Steenaard, EHEDG Treasurer



Studying Food Safety Law

An initiative at Wageningen University in the Netherlands has caught the eye of GHI. As from September this year (2012), this University of Life Sciences will offer an international specialisation in (food) legal and regulatory affairs. From the perspective of GHI – global harmonization of food regulation on the basis of sound science – increasing knowledge about the involvement of legislators and other lawmakers with the food sector is of the utmost relevance. The programme has been developed by Prof. Bernd van der Meulen, the lead author of “Development of Food Legislation around the World” in “Ensuring Global Food Safety – Exploring Global Harmonization”. For details, see <http://bit.ly/AEo7pj>.

Aleksandra Martinovic

Chair EFFoST SIG Global Harmonization and GHI Ambassador For Montenegro

Anuga FoodTec and GHI

Anuga FoodTec is a large international exhibition for the food industry, held every three years in Köln (Germany, www.anugafoodtec.com). In 2009, there were more than 1200 exhibitors. This year it will take place from 27th to 30th March 2012 and GHI Information sheets will be available from organisations supporting GHI.

Anuga FoodTec publishes a newsletter,

AFT Quarterly, and Issue 3 included an article about GHI stating “*The global harmonization of food safety has become more important than ever before, a task which is at the heart of the Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI) featured here.*” The full-page feature, which explains what GHI stands for, can be downloaded from <http://bit.ly/wkvzDe>.

Agenda

Meetings with GHI involvement

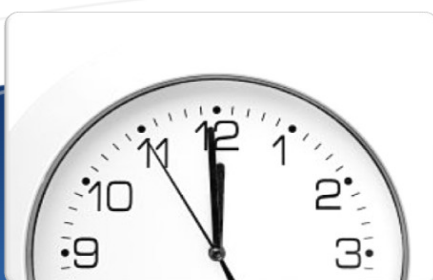
March 15-17 7th Nutra India Summit in 15 - 17 March 2012, Lalit Ashok, Bangalore, India (http://www.nutraindiasummit.in/nutra_2012/). Our Board member Dr. Vishweshwaraiah Prakash is the Chair of this, the largest event on nutrition in India. Dr. Prakash (prakashvish@gmail.com) will also take care of a GHI event during the summit, to take place on 16 March. This will probably also be the first meeting of a GHI Working Group on Nutrition.

April 22-24 The First North European Congress on Food (NEFood 2012), St Petersburg, Russia (<http://nefood.info/>). The Congress is organised by the Russian Federation of Food Science and Technology, RUSFoST. Its President, Prof. Mark Shamtsyan (mark.shamtsyan@yandex.ru) is also the Russian GHI Ambassador. A meeting of the GHI Working Group Mycotoxins will be chaired by Prof. Naresh Magan (n.magan@cranfield.ac.uk).

May 15-17 Global Food Contact 2012, Baltimore, USA (www.food-contact.com). This meeting is organised by Pira International, Cleeve Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, UK. Dr. Alejandro Ariosti from Argentina, an active member of GHI, will give a presentation on GHI and discuss Ensuring Global Food Safety – Exploring Global Harmonization.

May 23-26 The 6th Central European Congress on Food (CEFood 2012), Novi Sad, Serbia (<http://cefood2012.rs/>). Dr. Gerhard Schleining, GHI Board Member, will give a presentation about GHI.

June 25-28 IFT Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, USA (<http://www.am-fe.ift.org/cms/>). As is now traditional, there will be a general GHI meeting during this event, organised by Larry Keener (lkeener@aol.com) and Christine Boisrobert (christine.boisrobert@airliquide.com), both founding board members of GHI. Details will follow.



Become a vital contributor to providing the world's regulators, policymakers and public health authorities with a foundation for sound, sensible, science-based food laws and regulations

It costs only a few minutes to enroll

In order to build a truly global, impartial consensus on the current scientific knowledge that will inform objective regulatory decision-making on the world stage, GHI actively encourages scientists from industry, government and academia to join as individual members at no cost.

Please visit our website and complete a GHI Membership Enrollment form. There is no fee to join GHI.

1st Working Group Meeting: Food safety in relation to religious dietary laws, November 2011

The first GHI Working Group on food safety in relation to religious dietary laws took place at the Technical University in Berlin on the 11th of November 2011. Following an introduction about GHI, by Huub Lelieveld, Isabella van Rijn explained why the working group had been established. Unclear regulations and the lack of control on foods produced in an acceptable manner may cause food to be refused by importing countries, leading an increase in unnecessary food waste at a time when around 1 billion people globally go hungry each day. With proper regulations, and transparency in processing, we may be able to avoid food being destroyed unnecessarily. Van Rijn became interested in halal during a trade mission to Istanbul, organized by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs in 2008. Her Master Thesis in Epidemiology and Public Health described the implementation of halal certification by Islamic butchers in the Netherlands. But, there are no regulations ensuring dhabihah (method of slaughter) is truly halal. Worldwide there are problems with the control and the implementation of religious dietary laws. In countries where Islamic laws are applicable, quality marks are being copied and consumers are being misled. Similarly, there are no restrictions controlling the physical characteristics of food products. For example, at the beginning of 2011, so-called halal chicken sausages were withdrawn from supermarkets when they were found to contain pork. The GHI working group on **food safety in relation to religious dietary laws** was established because these problems arise for many religious groups with specific dietary practices including the Jewish Kashrut and Hinduism. During the meeting, it became clear that problems with the implementation of religious dietary laws, which are important in so many countries, also lead to a lack of trust in foods that are imported by these countries. In November 2012, a conference in Pakistan will discuss the issues for halal. In general, information about food safety, in relation to religious dietary laws, is lacking as are regulations concerning the application of food technologies and religious dietary laws. There is also need for training and education on religious dietary laws and their implementation in organizations such as Universities. The next meeting of the working group will take place in March 2012 and details will be announced on the GHI event calendar. For more information, email religiousdietary-laws@globalharmonization.net

Isabella van Rijn

August 5-9 The IUFoST 16th World Congress of Food Science and Technology, Foz do Iguacu, Brazil (<http://iufost.org.br/>). A committee chaired by the GHI representative of the Food Chemistry Division of EuCheMS, Prof. Hans Steinhart, has put together a symposium on 'International Perspectives of Food Safety and Regulation: A need for Harmonized Regulations' The Chairs of the Working Group Mycotoxins, Naresh Magan and Mark Shamtsyan, intend to organise a WG meeting during the congress. Prof. Sangsuk Oh (ssoh71@yahoo.com) and Dr. Prakash have assumed responsibility for coordinating Working Group meetings. They will also organise a GHI General Assembly during this congress.

November 5-9 The 7th Conference of the World Mycotoxin Forum and XIIIth IUPAC International Symposium on Mycotoxins and Phycotoxins in Rotterdam, Netherlands (<http://www.wmfmeetsiupac.org/html/welcome.asp>). Details about the WG Mycotoxins meeting will follow.

November 7-9 Annual Meeting of EHEDG (www.ehedg.org) in Valencia, Spain. EHEDG is one of the sponsors of GHI (see elsewhere). The GHI Working Group Food Contact Materials, chaired by Eric Partington (eric@effex.co.uk), will hold a meeting during this event.

November 20-23 EFFoST Annual Conference in Montpellier, France (www.fffostconference.com/index.html). Details about GHI events during the conference will follow.

Anyone organising a meeting or participating in a meeting with GHI involvement, please inform Dr. Aleksandra Martinovic (aleksandram74@gmail.com), GHI Meetings Coordinator and GHI Ambassador for Montenegro.

GHI and the Global Harmonization book discussed at a Washington meeting on Food Contact Materials regulations

During October 2011, Keller & Heckman LLP, an attorney specialized in food contact materials (FCMs) regulations, organized the Technical Food Packaging Law Seminar in Washington DC (US). K&H has its headquarters in Washington DC and corporate branches in San Francisco (US), Brussels (BE) and Shanghai (CN). Among the main issues presented at the seminar were: US-FDA, European Union, Latin American and Asia/Pacific (China, ASEAN, Australia) FCMs regulations; a comparison of the legal status of materials in the USA and the European Union (multi-jurisdictional case study); FCMs regulations in non-harmonized fields in the European Union; GMPs in FCMs manufacture, customers assurance and liability; etc. Alejandro Ariosti (National Institute of Industrial Technology - Argentina) presented the Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI) and the book "Ensuring Global Food Safety" during the session on "Food Contact Legislation in the Americas (South America and Central America)".

Harmonised monitoring as basis for food safety

International trade of agricultural and food products including seafood has been increasing steadily over the last few decades. Most countries give a high priority to ensuring food safety on domestic and imported food products. One important factor in protecting the public from unsafe food products is monitoring of hazardous biological and chemical substances such as food pathogens, chemical residues like herbicides and pesticides, chemical contaminants including heavy metals, and mycotoxins and other natural toxins. Monitoring hazardous substances in food can be defined as the performance and analysis of routine measurements to detect changes in agricultural and food products, which may have implications for human health. To achieve this, it is essential to have knowledge about the current situation and trends with regard to biological hazards and changes in chemical hazardous substances throughout the food production chain.

Since radiological contamination monitoring began in US agricultural products about fifty years ago, other chemical and biological hazardous substances have been added to the national systematic monitoring plan. EU legislated food law includes mandatory monitoring of hazardous substances in food by all member states. And since 1976, WHO/FERN/Food monitoring data show that many countries have participated with the submission of their monitoring data.

Selection of hazardous substances, food products for monitoring, analytical methods, frequency of sample collection, equipment and instruments for analysis, and personnel should be evaluated for risk based on a cost-efficient monitoring system in each national and local monitoring unit. Because hundreds and thousands samples will be analyzed, a systematic monitoring plan is essential and robust quality control implemented to assure Stakeholder trust. It is unlikely that one laboratory can manage quality control of all hazardous substances in a complex food system. National or international reference laboratories for biological or chemical hazardous substances in food need to be established and coordinated to ensure appropriate implementation of food safety measures.

The Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI) aims to achieve global scientific consensus, which includes appropriate monitoring systems. Developed countries such as the US, Europe and others have established monitoring systems for food safety, but developing countries need help implementing suitable monitoring system with respect to priorities, based on risk assessment amongst hazardous substances in food, cost-efficiency and the availability of personnel with relevant expertise. The consensus of scientists around the world in the implementation of systematic monitoring system, tailored for developing countries, will provide solid foundations for ensuring better food safety globally.

Sangsuk Oh

Dr. Sangsuk Oh, is Professor, Department of Food Science and Technology, Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea, and an Executive Committee Member of the Global Harmonization Initiative; Director, Korea Food Safety Research Institute; Member of Committee on Food Safety Emergency to the Prime Minister; Chairman of Committee on Food Standards in KFDA (Korea Food & Drug Administration).

Global Food Contact in Baltimore, 15-17 May 2012

This year, on 15-17 May, in Baltimore, USA, there is another meeting on the same, clearly “hot”, topic: “Global Food Contact”, for which Alejandro Ariosti has been invited as a speaker and where he again will discuss the opportunities that involvement of the Global Harmonization Initiative can offer. For details, see the agenda in this Newsletter.

WG Mycotoxins meeting

In conjunction with the EFFoST Conference in Berlin (DE) on the 9th November 2011, the GHI Working Group on Mycotoxins met to discuss how global mycotoxin problems might be reduced. Vast amounts of food (for some products up to 50%) are lost, unfit for human or animal consumption, because of the presence of mycotoxins.

Prof. Naresh Magan (Cranfield University, UK) summarised the importance of mycotoxins and the impact they have in both developing and developed countries, current regulations, control strategies and sampling issues. Achieving consensus on the food safety aspects of mycotoxin contamination may result in harmonised regulations and eliminate unfair competitive practice arising from differences in current regulations. A report on the meeting is available from the GHI Secretariat

(secretariat@globalharmonization.net)

Prof. Magan will draft a project proposal for discussion at the next meeting (St Petersburg, RU) in conjunction with NEFood 2012 (22nd-24th April 2012, <http://nefood.info>), organised by prof. Mark Shamtsyan, co-chair of the Mycotoxins WG.

GHI at the 13th Annual Food Regulations

The 13th Annual Food Regulation and Labeling Standards Conference (9-10th November 2011) is one of the leading food and nutraceutical regulation meeting in the Australasian region. Organized by Informa, the theme was 'towards consistent, coherent and user-friendly policies'. Four speakers were invited from GHI including two keynotes Dr. Prakash and Prof. Van der Meulen as well as two invited presentations from Drs. Ghosh and Juliano; Dr. Ghosh also chaired the first day.

Dr. Ghosh presented on 'Personalized food and nutrition: Science-Practice-Regulations', highlighting the role and responsibility of GHI, and how platforms such as international conferences are important for both GHI and other professionals.

Dr. Juliano described 'A national approach to environmental labelling of food in Australia', and suggested initiatives such as GHI have a central role in setting up International Advisory Groups to assist countries in the harmonisation of approaches for environmental labelling globally. The vision of such an Advisory Group would be to ensure that consumers are informed of the true environmental impact of food products without being misled by different labelling approaches or by values on GHG emissions only. An article by Brad Ridoutt, Jay Sellahewa and Pablo Juliano, covering the presentation can be downloaded from the GHI website.

In his keynote presentation, Dr. Prakash argued that the quality and safety of food is no longer linked only with processing but also includes good agriculture practices as well as good manufacturing and consumer hygiene practices. Regulators must keep in mind the safety of food is not local but global, and should be evidence-based. Often, local practices are respected regardless of epidemiological evidence, and whilst local customs and practices are important in a social system these must be balanced against the need to adopt safe practices. GHI seeks to harmonize and initiate safe food practice through workshops and knowledge exchange throughout its member countries ensuring food laws are science-based. However, members do not only want to see food safety as a top priority but also the ready exchange of information, which will alert countries to potential problems leading to food contamination episodes, and training and capacity-building globally to promote food safety throughout the food chain. GHI has the unique challenge of bringing together organizations with the aim of ensuring food safety, based to sound research and evidence-based, from pediatrics to geriatrics and farm-to-fork or perhaps farm-to-folk.

Dr. Bernd van der Meulen gave a presentation about 'Global harmonisation of food policies and labeling'. He discussed the role of lawyers in global harmonization, and addressed the challenges of harmonization of food regulation in a world where the basic concepts of law and regulation are understood differently in different cultures. Models of comparative analysis were used to make sense of food legal requirements in the EU, the USA and elsewhere. The US approach focuses on adulteration and mis-branding as forbidden acts whilst EU law is more about 'do s' rather than 'don'ts'. Most requirements in the food area are on the product (approval requirements and food safety standards), the process (hygiene, traceability) and the presentation food product (via labeling and advertisement). Labeling presents a specific challenge to global harmonization because of language: the strict use of national languages is not only hampering trade but creates problems for an ever more mobile global population. However, some elements of a global language exist; we may not understand what is written in words but the message is made clear from the numbers and images used. In labeling, numbers are mainly about quantities and dates, and pictures tell a story. If we want to harmonize labeling, initial efforts should be directed towards those requirements expressed as numbers. Can we agree on a calendar? Can we agree on measurements? Pictures on the package should be limited to what is actually inside, and we should consider endorsing the development of symbols for the most urgent issues (e.g. allergens). If we want global consensus, we need to define what consumers need to know (safety) and what consumers have the right to know. At present, there is no consensus about the scope of consumers' right to know. It might help to think from the perspective of the internationally agreed human right to adequate food. This is understood to be about availability, safety and cultural acceptability of food, but includes labeling since consumers need to be informed about all constituents of foods that may influence safety and acceptability.

The presentations can be downloaded from the GHI website www.globalharmonization.net/Sidney.

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Dr. V. Prakash was until his recent retirement Director of CFTRI, Mysore, India. He is also the President of the Nutrition Society of India. E-mail: prakashvish@gmail.com

Ensuring Global Food Safety: Exploring Global Harmonization

edited by C.E. Boisrobert, A. Stjepanovic, S. Oh, and H.L.M. Lelieveld

Reviewed by W.H. Sperber,
Global Ambassador for Food Protection, Cargill (retired)

Upon first seeing the title, *Ensuring Global Food Safety*, the reader might expect that this would be a book about traditional food safety, detailing the hazards and control measures involved in food production, processing, and distribution. In fact, this book is nothing like that. Rather, the book's content is better described by its subtitle, *Exploring Global Harmonization*.

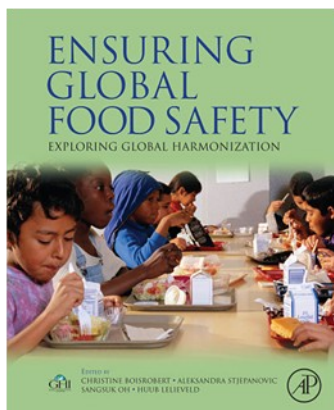
Organized by several founders and principals of the Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI, www.globalharmonization.net), the book extends an important GHI emphasis on food security and the economic and social "right to food" by developing a series of discussions about contemporary food safety issues and the feasibility and necessity of harmonizing a myriad of national food safety procedures and regulations with international standards. The need for such harmonization has been created by the growing global food trade and the increasing difficulty of identifying and controlling unexpected hazards.

Benefitting from the multi-disciplinary expertise of 58 contributors, the book is organized in 24 chapters. Major chapters cover regulations in many countries and procedures such as performance objectives, analytical methods, capacity building, and control of microbiological risks.

The last, dealing with the harmonization of regulations for *Listeria monocytogenes* control, may be a useful model for the harmonization of regulations for additional food-borne microbial pathogens.

A wide range of specific issues is covered in additional chapters on antibiotics, mycotoxins, food additives such as monosodium glutamate, food packaging, nanotechnology, novel processes, carcinogens and other harmful chemicals, nutrition, and ethnic foods.

Most of these chapters address topics that are not commonly encountered in traditional food safety texts, e.g., the analysis of the carcinogenic properties of foods and applied nutrition. These treatments of atypical issues are benefits for a profession in which most attention to food safety hazards is typically given to microbiological hazards.



This book should be a useful reference for those attempting to reference for those attempting to harmonize food safety regulations. It should also serve as a stimulus for the growing network of food safety professionals who are involved in emerging efforts to create or restructure national and international food safety organizations, thereby facilitating the harmonization of global food safety procedures and regulations.

Ensuring Global Food Safety

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DESCRIPTION

Based on the principles of the Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI), **Ensuring Global Food Safety** offers a rational and multi-faceted approach to current food safety issues, while arguing that a science-based global regulatory framework will enhance the safety, availability and quality of the food supply worldwide. GHI was specifically established to help build global consensus on the scientific evidence underpinning food safety policy-making. This book provides practical examples in key areas such as microbiology, toxicology and nutrition, as well as discusses possible improvements necessary to sustain the integrity of the global food supply in the 21st century.

Now Available from Academic Press

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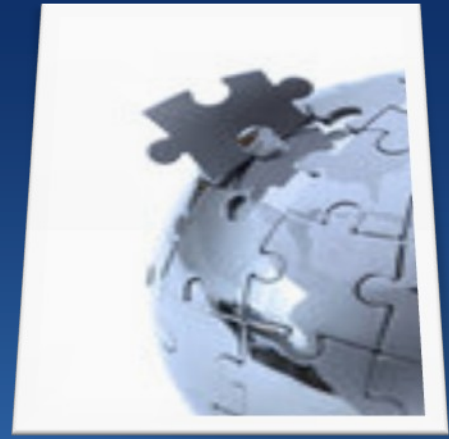
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Become a GHI Member

If you are interested in becoming a member of GHI, we invite you to take these simple steps:

- 1. Please visit www.globalharmonization.net and complete the Individual Membership Enrollment form. You will be asked to provide full contact information, current professional affiliations and areas of scientific expertise. There is no fee to join GHI.*
- 2. Once your application has been accepted, you will receive notification via email, along with information from GHI regarding upcoming meetings, working groups workshops, and more.*
- 3. For further questions on GHI membership, please send your inquiry to the attention of the Honorary Membership Director via email at membershipdirector@globalharmonization.net.*



Gain an influential voice in consensus with other experts that will have a real impact on reducing world hunger, improving food safety and nutrition, and supporting new technology applications.



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