

GHI Global Incident Alert Network. Study case Romania

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UNIVERSITATEA DE ȘTIINȚE AGRONOMICE ȘI MEDICINA VETERINARĂ

Workshop:

Current trends regarding food safety and food security in Romania



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Global
Harmonization
Initiative
Advocating science-based
food safety law and trade

Current trends regarding food safety and food security in Europe

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

Biotechnology

*Tackles cellular and biomolecular processes to develop technologies and products for human consumption **to help improve the quality of life and health of the entire planet.***



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HOME > WORKING GROUPS

Global Incident Alert Network Working Group



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Purpose:

Increase Food Safety WorldWide

How the food professionals could approach possible risks they see from inside a food company?

<https://www.globalharmonization.net/wg-global-incident-alert-network>



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A specific GHI Working Group was established

Chair / Co-chair

M. Dalla Rosa - Wu Chin

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Prof., PhD Marco Dalla Rosa 
Professor of Food Technology
University of Bologna
Department of Agricultural and Food Sciences

Mission

- *Sampling of food for safety* is in most countries less than 1%. The chances of government agencies finding serious food safety incidents before there are victims consequently are very small. *Usually people find out first, thus when it is too late.*
- Employees working in the food industry may know and some are most likely to **know about incidents before the product is put on the market**. *Employees*, however, *often do not dare to report the incident* because of the potential consequences, such as losing their job or demotion.



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Objectives

- developing an **anonymous system to limit the consequences of dangerous chemicals** added to food or the **presence of pathogenic microorganisms in food**. The system is intended to enable employees *to report such incidents that otherwise would not be reported fully anonymously* - hence to effectively **protect whistleblowers**.
- an easy-to-find and well-known webpage: <https://whistle.globalharmonization.net>. It is now a **reporting form with questions** to obtain as many as possible **details about the incident**. The questions have to be answered, however, without information that could be used to identify the reporter. Nevertheless, the information needs to be as complete as possible because there will be no possibility to ask the anonymous whistle-blower later. The *whistleblower* needs to realize that the case can only be addressed with sufficient details.
- Using its global network **GHI** will **check if the report is real** or is meant to defame a company and individuals, take revenge or inappropriate humor.



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Developing a **questionnaire** to be filled in anonymous way by food professionals or technicians working in companies.

REPORTING FOOD SAFETY INCIDENTS THAT MAY LEAD TO SERIOUS HARM

ANONYMOUSLY

If you are aware of anything that is wrong with food to the extent that consumption may cause serious harm and you see no other way to prevent such harm, you are invited to fill in the form below. The Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI) will then evaluate the incident and act upon it in such a way that the source of the information, you, is not revealed. There are 11 questions, answer as many as possible.

By filling in this form, it is assumed that you

1. have reasons not to report the food safety incident internally
2. or did report the food safety incident internally but to no avail

Please be aware that the facts you provide will be checked to judge if the incident:

1. is real or is:
 - intended to defame a company or individuals
 - to take revenge
 - misplaced humour
2. can indeed do serious harm to people's health

**Provide as many as possible details about your food safety concern, but
no information that can be used to identify you.**



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Provide as many as possible details about your food safety concern, but
no information that can be used to identify you.

Answer the questions below as completely as possible

1. The issue of concern is:
 - Microbiological:
 - Chemical:
 - Physical:
 - Other:

2. Do you expect consumers to get ill?
 - If so, why?
 - Has this happened before?
 - Since when are you concerned?
 - When did the food safety incident start?
 - If it is repeating, how often?
 - How is it done?
 - Why is it done?



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3. The product of concern:

- Product (e.g., bread, cereals, meat, ...)
- Brand:
- Packaging (e.g., can, bottle, jar, wrap, ...)
- Volume or weight
- Composition
 - i. Salt (%)
 - ii. Sugar (%)
 - iii. Preservatives:
 - Type and concentration
 - iv. Other (additives), list:
 - Name of substances and concentrations (e.g. % or mg/kg)

4. How is the product processed?

- Decontamination processes:
 - i. Pasteurisation (time and temperature)
 - ii. Sterilisation (time and temperature)
 - iii. High-pressure (time, temperature and pressure)
 - iv. Irradiation, with details, such as radiation source:
 - Cobalt-60
 - Cesium-137
 - X-rays
 - e-beam
 - other details
- Other processes of concern (specify)

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5. Is the product packed

- Before the decontamination process
- After the decontamination process, aseptic
- After the decontamination process, not aseptic

6. Details of packaging

- Material of container (e.g., glass; plastic; paper)
- Material of lid (if relevant)
- Other details

7. Dates printed on the packaging, such as:

- Production date
- Best before date
- Use before date



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8. Other information on the packaging, such as:
 - Batch number / Lot number
 - Barcode
 - Other
9. Storage conditions:
 - Inside or outside
 - Temperature
 - Time
 - Humidity
 - Exposure to light
10. What is wrong?
 - Wrong additions (list substances, amounts and any other details)
 - Results of chemical analysis
 - Results of microbiological analysis
 - Deviating process conditions
 - Too long run times before cleaning
 - Wrong cleaning conditions
 - Wrong sanitation conditions
 - i. Chemicals used (types and concentrations)
 - ii. Temperature and time
 - iii. Other
 - Falsification of production date, best before date and/or use before date



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11. Where is it happening?

- Company name:
- Company location
 - i. City:
 - ii. Address:
 - iii. Province, county or region (if relevant):
 - iv. Country:

Additional comments

Please write down here any other information you want to provide or if you want to write more about the incident in your own way.

Be careful not to provide information that can be used to identify you.

Date of submitting this form:

SUBMIT



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Now available in over 30 languages for food industry workers wherever they are
<https://whistle.globalharmonization.net>

Would you let your family eat the food you make at work?

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¿Permitiría Ud. que su familia consuma el alimento que Ud. produce en su trabajo?



Bạn có cho gia đình mình ăn những thực phẩm bạn làm tại nơi làm việc không?

هل تسمح لأسرتك أن تأكل من الطعام الذي تصنعه في العمل؟

您会让您的家人食用在您的公司中制作的食物吗?



Позволите ли вы своей семье потреблять продукцию, которую производит Ваше предприятие?

Կթոյպատրե՞ք ձեր ընտանիքի անդամներին ուտել ստանդ, որը պատրաստել եք աշխատավայրում



<https://whistle.globalharmonization.net>



GHI Whistleblower Food Safety Incident Report Site

هل تسمح لأسرتك أن تأكل من الطعام الذي تصنعه في العمل؟



Would you let your family eat the food you make at work?



Bạn có cho gia đình mình ăn những thực phẩm bạn làm tại nơi làm việc không?



あなたの家族にあなたが職場（食品工場）で作った食品を食べさせますか？



¿Permitiría Ud. que su familia consuma el alimento que Ud. produce en su trabajo?



您会让您的家人食用在您的公司中制作的食物吗?



Позволите ли вы своей семье потреблять продукцию, которую производит Ваше предприятие?



ඔබවිසින් රැකියා ස්ථානයේදී පිළියෙල කරන ආහාර ඔබේ පවුලේ සාමාජිකයන්ට පරිභෝජනය කිරීමට දීමට තරම් එහි ප්‍රමිතිය ඔබට විශ්වාසදායකද?



GHI Whistleblower Food Safety Incident Report Site

If not then why not?
 Does it pose a health risk to people who consume it? If so, then you now have a way to report this anonymously



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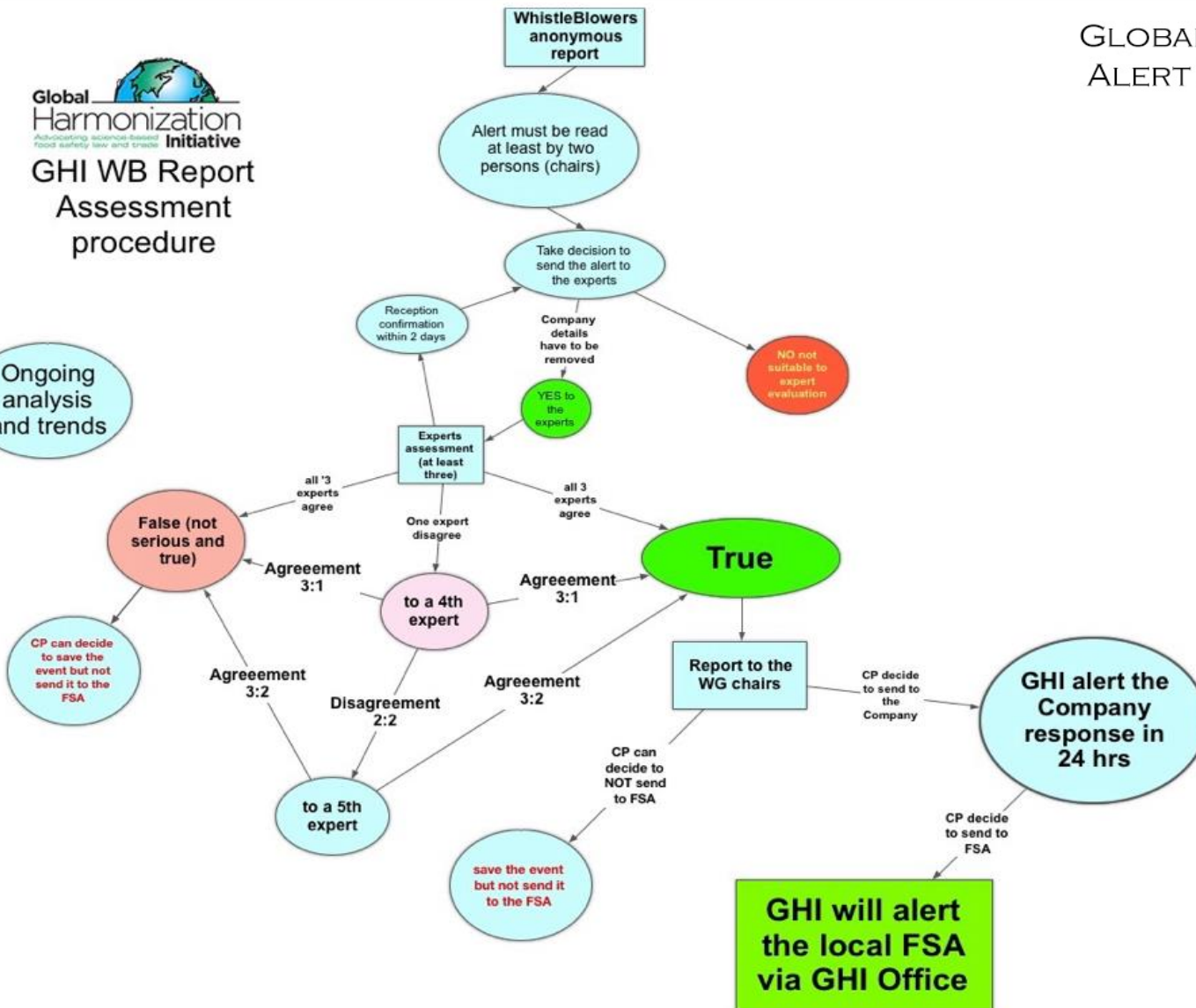
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Ongoing
analysis
and trends





The certification process of *Experts in the Global Incident Alert Network of GHI*, start in August 2021.

The first certification was for Prof. MD, *Yong Li*, from Australia.



EXPERT CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that

Title First name Surname

has been appointed as an advisory expert for the

Global Incident Alert Network of GHI

with the task to judge the validity of anonymous incident reports submitted to GHI

Prof. Dr. h.c. H.L.M. Lelieveld
President

Prof. Dr. Dumitru Mnerie
Certification Officer

Issued with no.2101/June 14, 2021



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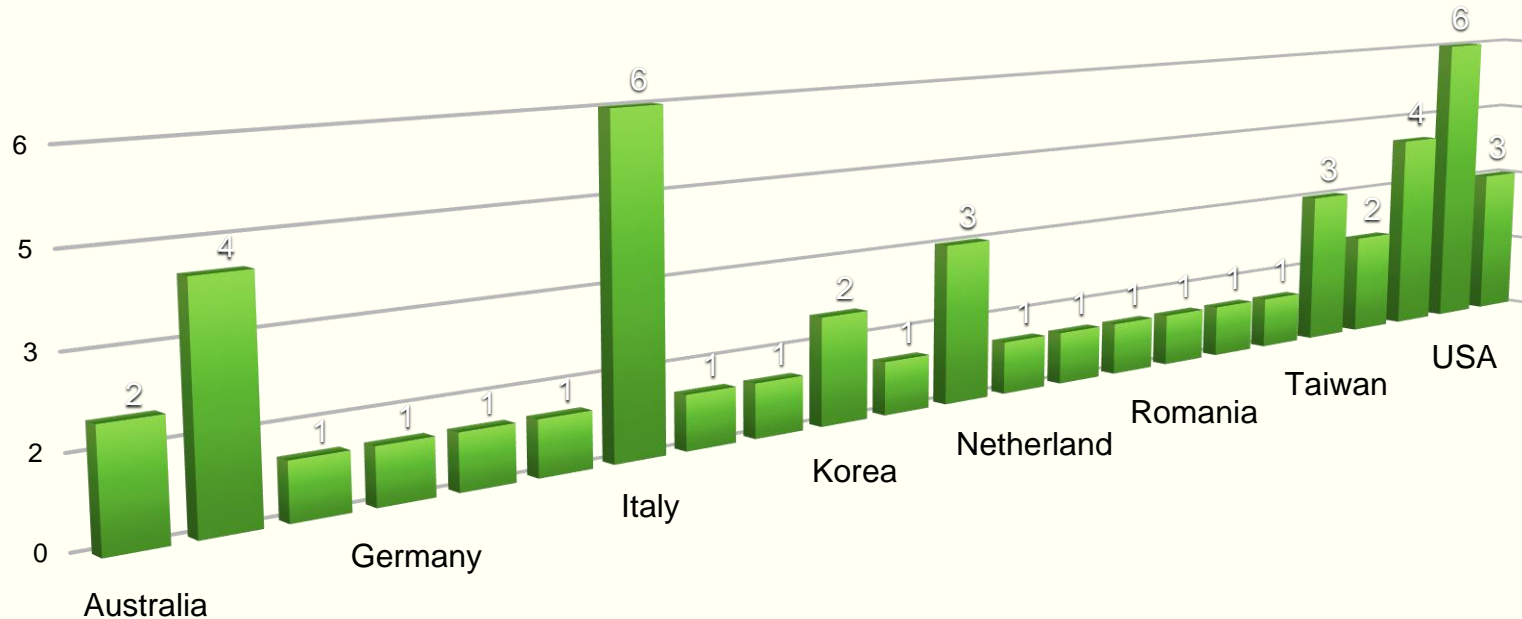
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ESTABLISHMENT OF A NETWORK OF EXPERTS IN FOOD SAFETY

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To date, **49** certificates have been issued,
from **26** countries,
on **5** continents



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GHI Whistleblowing Advisory Panel of Experts - Protocol

GHI has developed a system to report food safety issues that may lead to serious harm to consumers. The system is anonymous to the extent that even GHI has no way of finding out who the whistle blower (WB) is.

The WB may have tried to report the issue to their management and/or have tried to obtain the attention of the local food safety authority (FSA) or equivalent, but in both cases to no avail. And therefore is looking for another alternative to report the issue.

Because the GHI whistleblowing system is anonymous, it is not possible to ask the WB questions after submission of their report. Therefore, the WB is asked to answer as many as possible of the questions on the WB form and if desired to describe the incident in the WB's own words.

There is a risk that people will report an incident to harm a company or to take revenge even though there is not a serious issue. The information provided by the WB on the GHI form is expected to be enough for the expert panel to determine with a reasonable certainty that the report is sincere.

Therefore, the report will be submitted to the GHI Advisory Experts (GAE) panel to determine if in their judgment the report is authentic and represents a significant risk to consumers.

A protocol to systematically evaluate the WB's submission has been developed that follows the following steps:

1. If a report arrives at GHI, it is automatically sent to the three chairs of the working group for the Global Incident Alert Network (GIAN). There will always be at least one of the chairs on duty.
2. If the report is not in a language understood by the chair(s), the report is translated using a professional translation program and checked by a GHI ambassador or member who is fluent in the original language.
3. The chair(s) then decides in as short a time as possible, ideally a maximum 24 hours, if the report is sufficiently credible and has enough information to evaluate, and is therefore suitable for distribution to the GAE.
4. If it is decided that it is suitable, the report is sent to all the GAE panellists with both the original and if not in English, the translation.

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5. The GAE are then asked to judge if the incident reported is serious and may harm consumers. Experts are not restricted to the country or region where they live. Actually, the more and varied background of the panellists, the more credible the process.
 - a. If an expert is not sufficiently familiar with the subject of the WB report, the reply may be "cannot judge".
 - b. Otherwise, the expert reports with "yes, serious, needs action" or with "no, no action needed".
 - c. The expert is always free to supply additional information that may help the GIAN chairs with the follow up.
6. If the number of respondents with
 - a. "No" is >~66%, the case is filed and no actions are taken unless a few panellists in the judgment of the chair(s) has made such a strong case, that the chair(s) feels it still must be move forward, possibly indicating the basis for this decision to the food safety authority being contacted.
 - b. "Yes" is >~33%, the GIAN chairs send a message to the GHI president asking to formally inform the local food safety authority.*
7. The GHI president then sends a cover letter (by email) with a formal letter on GHI stationery using the attached templates:
 - a. Alert email "email to fsa.jpg" template
 - b. Alert letter based on the attached "Letter to FSA template.pdf" template. The letter will be attached to the email.

* A food safety authority (FSA) database is being kept by GHI and those responsible for it are expected to continually updates the list of contact details for the various FSA around the world, so that no time is lost in case of a serious incident that requires urgent action. GHI Ambassadors are expected to assist with this process.



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Examples of the whistleblowing (2022)

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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"

Vienna, Austria, European Union - 4 May 2022

Mrs. Lillian Ringsdorf, MD, MPH
Texas Human and Health Services
Department of State Health Services - Public Health Region 8
7430 Louis Pasteur Dr
San Antonio, TX 78229, Texas
USA

Dear Mrs. Lillian Ringsdorf,

Serious potential food safety/health risk that demands urgent attention

The Global Harmonization Initiative (GHI), a not-for-profit international network of food science professionals dedicated to food safety and food security, and chartered in Austria has developed an anonymous system to report suspected serious food safety incidents. The link to the anonymous reporting system is <https://whistle.globalharmonization.net/>. A more extensive explanation can be found at this link: see [here](#).

The reason for this message:

We have received information of a potential serious microbiological risk with ice cream produced in the following company's plant:

#2: Ice cream manufacturing facility. Birds and bats in the facility. Management refuses to stop the production lines, potentially exposed to animal droppings. Country: USA

#3: Dairy products with an unsubstantiated THT and without a dairy mark are sold without an ingredient declaration. Country: Netherlands

#4: has a labor practice involving dishonest stocking time limits. The dishonesty involves skipping steps (sometimes multiple or even some time consuming steps) in the process but expecting the full task including the skipped steps within the shortened time limits. How extensive the step skipping is varies from department to department. Country: USA



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Case study **ROMANIA**

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From discussions held with 45 people from Romania, in connection with the production and/or marketing of food, the following was found:

- *Only one* vaguely heard about the GHI action
- **80% agree** with the *whistleblowing*, but *under the guarantee of anonymity*
- **86.7%** believe that for now in Romania *there is no law to protect the whistleblower*
- **35.6%** *trust the boss/employer*, that he will not allow a food to reach the consumer if it is *not compliant*.
- **11.11% admitted** that they knew sometime about *some non-conformities*, **not very serious (!?!?)**, but **preferred not to report** them, for fear of *upsetting* their bosses and/or *losing their jobs*.



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*„The importance of **whistleblowing and whistleblower protection** is increasingly recognized by regulators around the world. Nevertheless, the state of whistleblowing legislation varies from country to country, with some **having no specific legislation**, others having fairly comprehensive legislation”. ...*

*... „Many laws focus on the reporting mechanism and **not enough on the protection of whistleblowers and their needs**. The negative impact of bullying and harassment of employees on food safety management has not yet been fully recognized and this practice is not yet considered a **critical food safety failure**”.*

(„STATUS OF WHISTLEBLOWING LEGISLATION IN THE FOOD SECTOR IN SELECTED COUNTRIES”, Yasmine Motarjemi, Peter Overbosch and Huub Lelieveld, GHI Working Group Ethics in Food Safety Practices, Vienna, 2 September 2021”

- **Romania** is mentioned as a country which have a more or less developed legislation on the subject.

➤ ”



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Food safety laws and regulations

- **Law no. 150/2004** regarding the safety of food and animal feed
- **Order 45 /2012** regarding the market control of nutritional and health claims written on food products
- **Decision no. 723/2011** regarding the establishment of the legal framework necessary for the application of Regulation (EC) no. 1.924/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 20, 2006 regarding nutritional and health claims on food products
- **Emergency ordinance no. 97/2001** regarding the regulation of food production, circulation and marketing
- ...



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Institutions and organizations in relation with Food safety

- National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority, (A.N.S.V.S.A.)
- State inspection in the food industry
- National Authority for Consumer Protection, (ANPC)
- Autoritatea Europeană pentru Siguranța Alimentară
- ...

Consumer complaints on food quality
to *National Authority for Consumer Protection, (ANPC)*
(Ex. Timiș County)



Case study **ROMANIA**

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<https://www.roaliment.ro>



The "**Consumer Caravan**" campaign - control of the commissioners of the National Authority for Consumer Protection (ANPC), at a unitary level, throughout the country - extensive control actions took place, in September, 2022, in Lugoj and Timisoara:

- Control of economic operators in food field.
- definitive stoppage of the sale of more than 2 tons of non-compliant food products
- the lack of information about the allergens that the preparations may contain
- improper conditions for the sale of food products (infestation with cockroaches/flies/parasites, products stored directly on the pavement, etc.)
- non-compliance with food storage temperatures, in accordance with the manufacturers' specifications.



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Proposal for *Global Incident Alert Network* in Romania



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Advocating science-based
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Proposal for *Global Incident Alert Network* in Romania

- ✓ It is recommended that the *GHI develop an international guideline* outlining best practice, i.e., the optimal procedures for reporting, investigating and handling complaints, as well as requirements for employee protection.
- ✓ Till now, in Romania, with Expert Certificate is *Prof.dr. Anca Miron*, (University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Iași, Romania), with the task to judge the validity of anonymous incident reports submitted.
- ✓ *The certification process remains open to specialists.*
- ✓ *raising social awareness* of the workers from food industry
- ✓ *promoting whistleblowing* in the food sector and setting requirements specific to food safety.
- ✓ *Promotion GHI – Global Incident Alert Network*

<https://www.globalharmonization.net/wg-global-incident-alert-network>

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