

**Contract FP7 KBBE-213178-VITAL  
Mid Term Review results: April 2008 – October 2009  
Responses to reviewers' report**

We thank the reviewers for their constructive and thorough review, and are encouraged by the positive comments in their report. Our responses to overall recommendations highlighted by the reviewers are as follows:

*Extension to project*

We attach a request for an extension of the project for 6 months, and revised Description of Work which details the modified timelines of each Workpackage.

*Use of terminology*

We have changed the term “questionnaires” to “background review questionnaires” in the revised Mid-Term Report and the revised Description of Work. We have changed the term “audit” to fact-finding mission” in the revised Mid-Term Report and the revised Description of Work. We will use these terms henceforward.

*Monitoring of laboratory performance*

Performance and quality of each data-gathering laboratory's results will be regularly monitored by a team composed of the Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator and the Task 2.1 Leader. A standard reporting form will be produced for each supply chain, so that each data-gathering laboratory can report their results in a harmonised manner for checking.

*Page 2 Clearer explanation of the ring trial data*

We acknowledge the reviewers' consideration that the interpretation of the data requires clearer explanation, and we will endeavour to ensure more clarity in the final report.

*Page 3 Development of the communication strategy*

We will develop, in this project year, a draft timelined strategy for communicating the information from VITAL to various stakeholders and end-users. This draft will be finalised during the Consortium Meeting in April 2010, and then placed on the public pages of the project website.

*Person-to-person spread within the risk modelling*

We acknowledge that secondary transmission may affect the total disease burden caused by viruses in foods. The focus of VITAL, however, is to estimate the infection risks at consumption of virus contaminated foods. Person-to-person transmission *per se* does not affect this infection risk. It will, however, increase the total burden of viral foodborne disease and will be acknowledged as such in VITAL reports and presentations.

*Linking with the IAFP and CIES*

A significant reason for our application for an extension is that we wish to hold our final symposium at a time when we could attract the highest number of delegates. We will seek to expand the impact of the symposium by approaching scientific societies such as the International Association for Food Protection and the Federation of European Microbiological Societies, with a view to holding a joint conference.

*Use of simplified approaches to be developed for HACCP as the basis for industry guides*

VITAL will produce an approach based on a literature review of existing HACCP systems, analysis of fact-finding missions, comparative analysis of areas of concern (including cluster analysis) and linking of sampling results with areas of concern. The project will also produce generic HACCP guidance for each supply chain focusing on viruses based on the knowledge gained. This should ultimately provide a platform for the future development of a simplified approach.

*Ensure clearer audit trail in the minutes of meetings*

We will henceforward include Action Points and Actions Taken in the minutes of the Research and Dissemination Management Board and the Core Administration Team.