

PROJECT PROGRESS SUMMARY

2ND YEAR

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: Development and application of a TTI based Safety Monitoring and Assurance System for Chilled Meat Products

PROJECT N° : QLK1-2002-02545

ACRONYM OF THE PROJECT: TTI-MEAT SAFETY SMAS

TYPE OF CONTRACT: Research and Technology Development Project

CONTRACT N° : QLK1-2002-02545

TOTAL PROJECT COST (in euro): 2,210,597 €

EU CONTRIBUTION (in euro): 1,416,772 €

PROJECT COORDINATOR

NAME: Dr Petros S. Taoukis

TITLE: Asst Professor

ADDRESS: 5 Iroon Polytechniou

TELEPHONE: +30-210-7723171

TELEFAX: +30-210-7723163

E-mail address: taoukis@chemeng.ntua.gr

KEYWORDS (5 maximum - Please include specific keywords that best describe the project.):
Meat, Safety, Chill chain management, TTI

World wide web address: <http://smas.chemeng.ntua.gr>

List of Participants:

- 1 National Technical University of Athens, Greece
- 2 Swedish Institute for Food & Biotechnology, Sweden
- 3 Agricultural University of Athens, Greece
- 4 National Food Center, Ireland
- 5 TNO Nutrition and Food Research Institute, The Netherlands
- 6 Institute of Food Research, UK
- 7 Creta Farm SA, Latzimas, Greece

Period covered by the progress summary: 1-1-2004 to 31-12-2004

Commencement DATE : 1-1-2003

DURATION : 36 months



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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Co-ordination and administration

NTUA - National Technical University of Athens,
School of Chemical Engineering, Laboratory of Food Chemistry and Technology,
5 Iroon Polytechniou, 15780 Athens Greece
Dr. Petros Taoukis
tel. +30-210-7723171, Fax. +30-210-7723163; e-mail: taoukis@chemeng.ntua.gr

Contractors

- **SIK -The Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology**, Microbiology and Product Safety Department, SIK, P.O. Box 5401, SE 402 29 Gothenburg, Sweden
Dr. Elizabeth Borch
tel. +46 31 335 56 00, Fax: +46 31 83 37 82, email: eb@sik.se
- **AUA- Agricultural University of Athens**, Dep. Food Science & Technology, Lab. Microbiology & Biotechnolgy of Foods, Iera Odos 75, Athens 11855, Athens – Greece,
.Dr. George John Nychas
tel: +30-210-529 4693; fax: +30-210-529 4693; e-mail : gjn@aua.gr
- **TEAGASK-** The National Food Centre, Food Safety Department, Teagasc Castleknock, Dublin 15, Ireland
Dr. James Sheridan
tel: + 353 1 8059539, Fax + 353 1 8059550 e-mail: jsheridan@nfc.teagasc.ie
- **TNO -Nutrition and Food Research**, P.O.Box 360, 3700 AJ Zeits, The Netherlands
Ir. E. Hoornstra
Tel + 31 30 6944131, Fax +31 30 6944901, e-mail: hoornstra@voeding.tno.nl
- **IFR -Institute of Food Research**, Food Safety Division, Norwich Research Park Colney, Norwich, NR4 7UA, United Kingdom
Dr. József Baranyi
Tel: +44(0)1603 255121; Fax:+44(0)1603 507723, e-mail: jozsef.baranyi@bbsrc.ac.uk
- **Creta Farm SA**, Latzimas, County of Arkadi, 74110, Greece
Dr. Constantin Genigeorgis
Tel: +30-28310-86700, Fax: +30-28310-58035, e-mail: cretafarm@otenet.gr

Section 2: Project Progress Report

Objectives:

The main tangible goal of the SMAS project is to develop a reliable and practical decision and management tool for an optimized handling of meat products in terms of both safety and quality. The aim of this research project is to study reliable and practical Time Temperature Integrator (TTI) systems. The project will expand on the scientific state of the art approach of mathematical modelling of dominating meat pathogens and translate this knowledge to TTI. TTIs will be applied as quality and safety monitors of meat products from manufacture to consumption.

The major expected achievements of the project will be:

- Accurate, validated mathematical models for safety and quality related microorganisms of ready to cook meat products. They will provide the meat industry with a tool for product development and safety assurance. The European authorities will have quantitative means for meat product risk evaluation.
- The development and study of Time Temperature Integrators (TTI) suitable for meat safety monitoring. These TTI will provide the meat industry and retail business with tools to monitor the chill chain.
- Improved distribution logistics and management of the meat chill chain from the application the ***Safety Monitoring and Assurance System (SMAS)***. SMAS could replace the current “First In First Out” (FIFO) practice and lead to risk minimization and quality optimization.
- Increased ability of the meat sector to control its weak link, the chill chain
- Fulfilment of consumer expectations that extra efforts and state of the art technology, represented by the use of TTI active labels and SMAS, have been employed to guarantee him low risk-high quality meat products.

Wide availability of state of the art information, from the project and other reliable sources (i.e validated mathematical models for pathogen growth, data for pathogen prevalence and concentration, distribution temperature profiles, dose response data, inactivation models, TTI and SMAS application) for Risk Assessment of specific meat products, through the establishment of an effective Internet site

Results and Milestones:

Modelling and model validation for growth of pathogenic bacteria incident to meat was systematically carried out with a series of experiments on meat products. These included pork, beef and lamb products. Based on an expanded version of Combase, the wide microbial data base that is worked out by a Participant of the project, new models were developed for the effects of temperature and CO₂ on the specific growth rate of major meat pathogens. Weaknesses of these models were resolved with the experimental work. The growth of the targeted pathogenic bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella enteritidis*, and *E. coli* O157:H7 on different meat products, with or without natural microflora, stored under aerobic or modified atmosphere packaging, was studied and modelled at different temperature conditions from 0 to 20 °C. Growth models of meat spoilage bacteria (pseudomonads, *Brochothrix thermosphacta*, lactic acid bacteria and *Enterobacteriaceae*) and shelf life models were also established and validated within the project, as a basis for correlation with the response of the TTI and the chill chain management system. The effect of spoilage microflora on the rate of the potential pathogen growth was an important issue that was systematically studied.

The work on the chill chain conditions was completed by building a valuable database from Greece and Netherlands. Data showed the importance of retail and domestic level. All the aspects of building a risk assessment algorithm for meat products were studied and significant sources of uncertainty were resolved by use of the appropriate input data, accurate predictive models and effective statistical tools. The established Meat Microbial Risk Assessment Site, was established and is constantly updated. It serves as a practical tool for the scientific community, meat industry, regulators, inspection authorities but also non-specialist laboratories, SME's and consumers. The site address is: <http://smas.chemeng.ntua.gr/MIRAM>. MIRAM contains published material relevant to Microbial Risk Assessment and material resulted from the SMAS project.

The development, evaluation and modelling of TTI devices that have the required response characteristics and accuracy to serve as monitors of temperature history and controllers of quality state and microbiological safety of meat products, was completed. Different designs of enzymatic Time Temperature Integrators of various kinetic characteristics were kinetically modelled and validated under variable temperature conditions. A new tricolour configuration (green-yellow-red) was developed. The TTI temperature sensitivity ranged in terms of activation energy values from 50 to 200 kJ/mol covering the range of kinetic behaviour of bacteria growth in meat products. A user friendly TTI software that correlates TTI response to meat quality was produced.

The SMAS algorithm for the management of the chill chain was developed and is being built into a software for use in field tests.

Finally, to gather knowledge about the consumers knowledge and opinions about freshness and labelling of fresh packaged meat, with or without TTI, a consumer test was carried out in Greece, Ireland, Netherlands and Sweden. It was concluded that the respondents are well aware of the importance of freshness of fresh packaged meat. Information of freshness is needed and wanted. Although some differences between the participating countries were recorded, a majority of the consumers are positive to TTI labelling.

Overall, work during the first two years progressed satisfactorily and in line with the targeted milestones.

Benefits and Beneficiaries:

The SMAS project and the achieved progress and obtained results will benefit meat industry, regulators, inspection authorities but also non-specialist laboratories, SME's and consumers.

Future Actions :

Work will continue focusing on the application of the validated microbial models, the risk assessment techniques, the refined TTI and the developed tools as the TTI software to further develop SMAS.

The SMAS chill chain management approach will be evaluated by mathematical simulation techniques as well as experimental work in the actual distribution and in laboratory scenarios. A SMAS software will be developed as a practical easy to use decision tool.

Further consumer research will be conducted to identify consumer response to the TTI signal as related to consumer perception of product quality.