

PERSONNEL

Commemorative medal



The Society of German Chemists awarded the Joseph-König commemorative medal to Professor Dr. Reiner Wittkowski, Vice-President of the BfR, at the end of 2017. The prize is in recognition of Wittkowski's work for the promotion and recognition of food chemistry, in particular his studies on the authenticity of foods using modern physico-chemical methods in the course of which he set international standards. Through his research in the field of chemical-analytical detection methods for verifying the geographic origin of foods, he is regarded as one of the founding fathers of authenticity research.

Award: Overseas Guest Expert in China

Dr. Carsten Faulstich, head of the "Product Identity, Supply Chains and Traceability" unit at the BfR, was nominated an "overseas guest expert" by the China National Research Institute of Food and Fermentation Industries (CNRIFFI). CNRIFFI is one of the leading research institutions in the field of the authenticity testing of foods in China and cooperation partner of the BfR since 2016, especially in the area of wine analytics.

New term for the BfR committees

The new, four-year term of the total of 14 BfR-committees started in January 2018. The 199 committee members will advise the BfR on an honorary basis until 2021 as independent experts. They consolidate the expert scientific knowledge

available in Germany on the highest possible level. The BfR committees "Evidence-based Methods in Risk Assessment" and "Biological Hazards and Hygiene" have been newly established.

A new beginning and a fond farewell

In August 2017, the Scientific Advisory Board of the BfR was re-appointed for its fourth term of office until 2021. The members advise the BfR on research prioritisation and the staffing of the committees attached to the Institute, and provide support in the expansion of contacts and cooperation projects. The Board will have 16 scientists from various specialised disciplines as members during the coming term of office. Six of the members are new and will be providing fresh expertise in the areas of animal welfare and statistics and strengthening the area of risk communication. In the course of the restaffing, Professor Dr. Monika Schäfer-Korting (Vice-President FU Berlin), who chaired the Board for many years, resigned her office. She has left the committee at her own request after almost 12 years in order to "hand over the tasks to a pair of younger hands". Professor Dr. Tanja Schwerdtle (University of Potsdam), who was deputy until now, was elected the new Chair.



Professor Dr. Tanja Schwerdtle, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the BfR since 2017

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Brain circulation in risk assessment

With the scholarship initiative “The European Food Risk Assessment Fellowship Programme”, EU-FORA for short, EFSA is promoting the scientific exchange between risk assessment institutions across national frontiers. The goal of the EU-FORA programme is the build-up of a network of “youngster scientists” in risk assessment and their supervisors. By doing so, EFSA is initiating closer cooperation of the next generation of risk assessment specialists in Europe. In addition to their practical work in a European assessment institution, the fellows receive six weeks of accompanying theoretical training in the form of four training modules on the risk assessment of foods and on risk communication. The programme is now moving into the second round. The BfR supports the initiative and has been hosting four of a total of 15 fellows of the programme from Poland, Greece and Norway for a year since autumn 2017.


Michal Jan Czyz of the Institute of Plant Protection, Poland

is working on the use of Data Science in risk assessment and early warning.

“I applied for the programme because I wanted to expand my skills in the area of modelling. Nowadays, we can go beyond the limits of traditional methods with computer-supported mathematical models. Within a few minutes we can predict analysis results or certain scenarios. In real life that would take years, cost a lot of money and possibly even damage people or the environment. In Poland I was involved mainly with the risk assessment of pests. Here I am getting to know many different types of risk assessment, especially during the training sessions”.


Ewa Matyjaszczyk of the Institute of Plant Protection, Poland

is preparing a systematic literature analysis of the risk assessment of plants and plant preparations in foods, with focus on willow bark.

“As an expert for food quality in Poland, I tend to work more at the beginning of the food chain, in the area of agriculture. With my project at the BfR I am moving more towards the end of the food chain, where I am involved with processed foods. It’s different from what I’ve been doing up to now and I’ve been very fortunate that I’ve been able to use a part of my formal training that I haven’t needed before while learning something new for my work in Poland at the same time”.


Georgios Marakis of the Hellenic Food Authority, Greece

is involved with the risk assessment of substances used in food supplements and enriched foods.

“In Greece I work in an authority that deals with the assessment as well as the management of risks. Although I have personal experience in the field of the management of nutritional risks, such as salt reduction, I’ve had less to do with the standardised assessment of risks of this kind. At the BfR, I am now getting acquainted with various methods of risk assessment while working with different scientists and getting to know their way of thinking and working. This ‘brain circulation’ was my motivation to participate in the EU-FORA programme, because it is the very heart of the European Union: working together for a better future”.


Josef D. Rasinger of the Institute of Marine Research, Norway

is conducting research on the computer-assisted identification and assessment of potentially mutagenic and carcinogenic heat-related contaminants in foods.

“My field of research in Norway is toxicogenomics, so I work a lot with bioinformatics and data mining. In modern toxicology, attempts are being made to avoid experiments with animals and more and more computer-assisted methods are being tested. I can learn a lot in this area at the BfR, so for me it’s a match made in heaven – there are many overlaps between our institutions. The way things are looking at the moment, we will continue our collaboration, even after my year here has expired”.