

HOW DO YOU TRACK DOWN FOOD RISKS EFFICIENTLY?

Ine van der Fels-Klerx became special professor of Food Safety Economics at WUR on 1 August. She does research on how the government and industry can detect risks in the food supply chain as thoroughly and efficiently as possible.

Van der Fels-Klerx works one day a week as special professor in the Business Economics chair group. She is also the Agrochains expertise group leader in the Toxicology & Agrochains business unit at Wageningen Food Safety Research (WFSR). The combination of contract research and university work is interesting for her. 'At WFSR we use computer models and literature study to identify the main food risks in the supply chain.

There are so many food safety risks: dioxins, heavy metals, fungal toxins, pesticides or antibiotics. You can't keep track of everything. But the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority can use our analyses to set priorities.'

'We don't pay enough attention to the economics of food safety'

At Business Economics, Van der Fels-Klerx focuses on the economics side of food safety. 'We use models to try to predict the most efficient way for the government or chains to use their budget so they have the best chance of de-

tecting food safety risks in time.' Some of the issues are about sampling: what kinds of tests do you use, and how, where, and when? 'Dairy organizations test the milk in the tank, for instance. At the moment that means they test a mixture of milk from different farms. So then if you do find something, you've got to check each farm separately to find the source. Our analyses are not intended to cut costs but to see how we can improve the process on the existing budget, so that the government and the chains can make transparent and justifiable decisions.'

So far we have not paid enough attention to the economics of food safety, says Van der Fels-Klerx.



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That surprises her. 'But it does make it interesting because there is so much uncharted territory. Then again, that's not great for my citation scores, since hardly anyone publishes on this topic,' she laughs.  TL