

Albanian food safety officials learn about best European practices from Irish counterparts

Aiming to bring the best European food safety practices to Albania, a group of 14 Albanian officials from several institutions involved in food safety participated in a week-long workshop, starting on 21 October 2019, at the headquarters of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) in Dublin.

Representatives of the Albanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD), the Food Safety and Veterinary Institute (ISUV), the National Food Authority (AKU) and the Public Health Institute (IShP) took part in the workshop in the framework of the Food Safety Project, a four-year, EU-funded programme to support strengthening of food safety, veterinary and plant health systems in Albania.

The objective of the workshop was to create a foundation to progressively develop and upgrade the risk-based inspection plan for Albania in 2020 and to work on the development of a multi-annual national control plan (MANCP).

FSAI CEO Pamela Byrne said in her welcoming remarks: *“The purpose of the workshop is not just to share knowledge and experience in Ireland but to work-out how to apply this in a practical manner in Albania and to progressively upgrade inspection and control planning throughout the lifetime of the project”*.

Albania’s Minister of Agriculture, Bledar Çuçi, acknowledged the support of the FSAI and the European Union through the Food Safety Project. *“We welcome this opportunity to access the systems and processes that Ireland can share with Albania,”* Mr. Çuçi said.

The Head of Development Cooperation at the EU Delegation in Tirana, Mario Mariani, noted the complexity of strengthening national food safety systems and encouraged MoARD and other Albanian institutions *“to maximise the opportunity of this important project.”*

As an official EU candidate country, Albania has already started the screening process on aligning its food safety standards to those of the European Union – and the process is unaffected by the political discussions over the opening of accession negotiations.

The Food Safety Project is working with the Albanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in support of its efforts to strengthen food safety and protect consumer health in accordance to best international standards. FSAI leads and coordinates an implementing consortium that also includes the Finnish Food Authority, the Irish Department of Agriculture and local partner Creative Business Solutions. The project aims to provide access to international best practices and experience through to January 2023.

The ongoing work of the project will not only create greater protection of human health but also support domestic agri-food industry development and help create access to new regional and international market opportunities.