

Market-based approaches to improving the safety of pork in Vietnam (SafePORK)



Issue

In Vietnam, pork is the most widely consumed meat and nearly all is sold in traditional (wet) markets. These markets supply nutritious and delicious food to millions of people. Yet, food hazards are pervasive, food scares common, trust in food low and enforcement capacity weak. Unsurprisingly, concerns over food safety are high and growing (for example, a nationally representative survey found that food safety was a major concern to the public).

Despite concerns, little was known about the actual risk food posed to human health. This evidence gap motivated research—funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)—to assess risks and opportunities for improving food safety (the PigRISK project). It developed the first quantification of the risk of food-borne diseases to human health and the first assessment of the cost of food-borne illness. Approximately one in five people fall ill each year due to pork-borne *Salmonella*, costing tens of millions of dollars each year. This evidence has been taken up at policy level through taskforces supported by the project.

But the pork value chain is not just a potential source of disease, it is also crucial for Vietnamese livelihoods and nutrition. Wet markets are mainly supplied by smallholder farmers, and value chains provide employment to tens of thousands of traders, mostly women. Moreover, traditional markets supply pork more affordably and accessibly than the

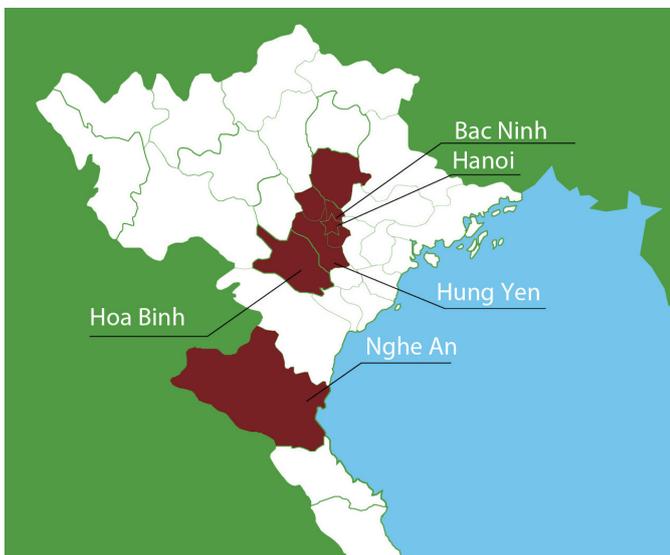
formal sector. Hence, it is important to develop ‘light-touch’ low-cost approaches tailored to the capacities of value chain actors which can be applied on a large scale.

Opportunities

Seeking to reduce the burden of food-borne disease in informal, emerging and niche markets, SafePORK will develop and evaluate light-touch market-based approaches to improving food safety, while safeguarding livelihoods in the pork sector.

Objectives

- Generate actionable evidence on the efficacy, feasibility and reach of current approaches to the improvement of pork safety in Vietnam.
- Design, pilot and evaluate light-touch, incentive-based, approaches to food safety in close partnership with the private sector.
- Agree with stakeholders a roadmap or theory of change through which project evidence can lead to safer food.
- Enhance engagement and benefit sharing for men and women in the pig value chain.
- Build capacity to understand and manage food safety risks, and improve risk communication among government partners, private sector actors, academics, donors and journalists.



Project sites (in red circles) including Hanoi, Hoa Binh, Bac Ninh, Hung Yen and Nghe An provinces

Research methods

- Performance of selected food safety initiatives will be assessed using a newly developed tool.
- Economics experiments will investigate the incentives and push factors leading to behavioural change.
- In selected value chains, intervention safety will be tested through a randomized controlled trial.
- Participatory approaches will be used to design and monitor the theory of change.
- Gender-focused formative studies will explore socio-cultural norms, roles and decision-making in the uptake of food safety interventions.
- Tailored needs-based training will be developed and delivered for a range of partners.

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Interventions

These interventions will include simple inexpensive tests to detect the presence of food-borne pathogens, the use of portable ozone machines (www.aqua21.co.uk) for safe and effective disinfection, and the training and certification of traders, increasing transparency and traceability.

Private sector linkages

The private sector is central to the development of sustainable incentive-based approaches to making pork safer, ensuring the interventions developed are feasible. Researchers will continue to interact with the small-scale traditional sector, but add recently emerging food systems, such as high quality organic outlets and industrial zone canteens that supply large quantities of food.

Key partnerships

This 4.5-year project, starting in October 2017, is funded by the ACIAR and implemented by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI).

Building on the multi-disciplinary team in PigRISK, and new partners, researchers will work on a number of specialized areas, including food safety, risk assessment, food value chains, animal welfare, economics and gender. The key partners are:

National partners	CGIAR programs	Australian partners	Other partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hanoi University of Public Health • Vietnam National University of Agriculture • National Institute of Animal Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CGIAR Research Program on Livestock • CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Sydney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Royal Veterinary College (RVC), UK

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