



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2018, Ghent

“Global food security and food safety:  
The role of universities”

## Food Safety Challenges in Traditional Pork Value Chains and Policy Engagement in Vietnam and Laos

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### Abstract

Food-borne disease (FBD) is a major public health issue in low income countries of South East Asia including Vietnam and Laos. The contamination of popular foods can occur all along the food value chain. Evidence on the burden of FBD is still limited but the risk is expected to be high due to poor food hygiene practices, missing incentives to change them, risky consumption habits and poor enforcement of existing legislation. We will present two case studies conducted since 2015 for Vietnam and Laos. For Vietnam the research included risk assessments (qualitative and quantitative, QMRA) of food safety hazards along the pork value chain (*Salmonella* and chemical) targeting Hung Yen and Nghe An province while for Laos the focus was on parasitic FBD (trichinella) in communities of Savannakhhet and Champasak provinces. Nearly half of collected pork market samples (N=217) in Hung Yen and Nghe An (Vietnam) were contaminated with *salmonella* and a QMRA concluded that 1–2 pork consumers from ten are at risk to suffer from *salmonella* related FBD while the chemical risk was low. Results for Savannakhhet (Laos) indicate 18% seropositivity for trichinella antibodies in pigs (N=417), results for Champasak (N=304) are currently analysed. Both case studies were implemented by interdisciplinary research teams. In both studies focus was given on policy engagement (national and lower). In Vietnam this was facilitated through an established taskforce for food safety risk assessment, an alignment with a World Bank funded national food safety assessment initiative and the national food safety working group which included various stakeholders and groups. For Laos a unique cross-sectoral ministerial platform has been established consisting of 6 ministries (agriculture, health, trade, defense, communication and tourism) which advised on community based interventions (e.g. awareness campaigns). Steps towards successful policy and multi-ministry engagement will be presented and discussed.

**Keywords:** Food safety, Laos, pork value chain, Vietnam