

Spanish markets open doors to food safety experts



CIES International Food Safety Conference invites delegates to know food safety management in leading Spanish markets

Focusing on "Food Safety: The Global Challenge", the 2009 CIES International Food Safety Conference held from 4th-6th of February in Barcelona organized a "Store Visit" to several leading Spanish food markets. The goal was to offer first hand experience about how leading companies in the Spanish food industry manage food safety and make sure any piece of food offered to consumers is safe and secure.

Mercabarna, one of the largest European wholesale markets, was one of the chosen places to visit. Created in 1967, Mercabarna supplies a 10 million people market, extends over 90 hectares of markets and facilities, and employs 8.000 people. Around 25.000 people visit the market daily. At present, 40% of the fruits and vegetables entering Mercabarna come from outside Spain.

[Photo Gallery: Cies Store Visit](#)

In a global market, is it possible to control and manage food safety beyond national borders?

Mr. Josep Faura, Director of Mercabarna Central Fruit and Vegetable Market, was firm in saying that developing countries are very strict when it comes to the quality of the fruits and vegetables they export: "For developing countries, the United States and Europe constitute their best markets, so they have to work according to their criteria. Exporters outside the EU are very strict and comply with the most restrictive certifications".

In this sense, Ms. Montse Ramoneda, responsible of the quality control department in Mercabarna, explained that "food safety has positively evolved in a very short time, and the most dramatic has been the mentality change. Today, producers believe in self-control, and they understand that food safety is a shared responsibility". The quality control department she manages employs 40 veterinarians and 5 technicians with competences to conduct official inspections, and although 3rd party certification is not mandatory, there are a growing number of companies that do so in Mercabarna.

"Dia market" stores and Caprabo stores

Following the Mercabarna visit, attendees from the CIES International Food Safety Conference had the chance to visit one of the "Dia market" stores in downtown Barcelona, followed by a visit to one of the Caprabo stores, the high end supermarket chain based in Catalonia.

The National Director of Quality and Environment at Dia Spain, Ms. Eva Pastouri, outlined the quality controls at the point of sale, stocks managing policy,

traceability, audits and recall policies. "In the case of Dia private label, all of our suppliers are audited by Dia and by third party laboratories, based on IFS5 protocol".

Certification is a must

In a similar way, the Marketing director at Caprabo, Ms. Anna Bolet, offered a detailed overview of the traceability requirements and quality controls that the chain requires from suppliers, warehouses and stores. Certification is a must, and auditing is used as a control method. Fresh produce labelling includes a code for employees with information on the packaging day, expiration date, and the date when the product should be removed from the shelves. The purpose is to offer top fresh products that satisfy customer expectations.

Ms. Nieves Abado, director of External Communications at Dia, explained that the big challenge to ensure food safety in the supply chain is traceability: "Even though risk 0 does not exist, the European consumer has no reasons to worry about food safety, because any product commercialized inside the EU complies with the strictest quality controls".

It doesn't matter where the product comes from

Ms Pastouri added that "Our challenge is always the same, it doesn't matter the circumstances in the market, even in the middle of an economic crisis. We must offer the best and safest product to our customers. It doesn't matter where the product comes from. Our standards are always the same: very strict and common to all of our suppliers."

Around 300 worldwide experts in food safety attended the Store Visit event organized by CIES, the Food Business Forum. The event is part of the annual CIES International Food Safety Conference. Over 600 food safety specialists from more than 50 countries are attending the current edition in Barcelona (retailers, manufacturers and service providers).

[Photo Gallery: Cies Store Visit](#)

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