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# Eurofins unveils ground-breaking multi allergen screening system

By Rory Harrington, 15-Apr-2011

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**A pioneering new multi-screening allergen method is more effective, accurate, quicker and cheaper than existing methods used in the food industry, said Eurofins.**

The mass spectrometry (MS) technique permits multiple direct detection of proteins from allergenic compounds in a single test, Bert Popping, company director of molecular biology and immunology, told FoodProductionDaily.com.

The new technology marks a move away from industry-standard methods ELISA (enzyme-linked immunosorbant assays) and PCR (polymerase chain reactions), which only indirectly detect allergens one at a time, said the company.

*"The new MS-based methodology enables detection of seven of the 14 groups that require labelling according to the European Commission's allergen regulation (68/2007/EC) in one single analysis,"* said Popping.

The technique also covers gluten regulation (41/2009/EC).

Popping added: *"The advantages are that this technology detects more than one peptide per allergenic compound. This means that if one peptide becomes instable due to processing, you still likely to see one or two of the others, thereby making the results more reliable."*

### Advantages over current techs

Eurofins said its new technique demonstrates significant advantages over commonly-used technology.

Presently, PCR is unable to detect a number of products with high protein - and therefore high allergen - content. Such limitations means it has therefore never been the perfect technique for detecting allergens, Popping explained.

ELISA has the ability to detect proteins through antibodies, but only one at time. This means that because there is the potential for the presence of several allergens on site food processors typically adopt risk-based approach.

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*"For economic reasons, typically only one or two of the likely allergens potentially contaminating the product are screened for, instead of looking for all possible ones,"* he said.

### Safer products, cost benefits

In contrast, Eurofins said its new analysis offers simple and easy identification of multiple allergens in complex foodstuffs leading to *"better risk management for food manufacturers, and ultimately, safer products for the consumers"*.

The direct detection of analytes significantly reduces the probability of false negative or false positive test results - limitations of the ELISA and PCR methods, said the global firm headquartered in Belgium.

It also cuts the turnaround time (TAT) and the cost of multi-screening are significantly lower than for individual ELISA based tests.

*"TAT will, in routine analysis for one allergen, be roughly the same,"* said Popping. *"But since typically when more than one ELISA is requested on a sample, TAT is extended to say, 1-2 weeks - maybe because of rare allergens that need testing - this will not be the case for MS since it's all in the same run."*

He added that cost-wise it would be cheaper for three or more allergen in the same sample, and become more economical with any allergen after the third, compared to ELISA.



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*“Calculated reduction will be approx 10 per cent after the third, 15 per cent after the fourth and so on,” he added. “Further reductions are envisaged when some of the further developments we have in the pipeline are implemented for this technology.”*

Eurofins said its lab method is accredited under ISO 17027. The peer reviewed paper was published this month in the Journal of AOAC International.

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