

Accepted Manuscript

Quantitative study of food safety climate in Belgian food processing companies in view of their organizational characteristics

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PII: S0956-7135(17)30624-2

DOI: [10.1016/j.foodcont.2017.12.037](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodcont.2017.12.037)

Reference: JFCO 5929

To appear in: *Food Control*

Received Date: 25 September 2017

Revised Date: 26 December 2017

Accepted Date: 27 December 2017

Please cite this article as: De Boeck E., Jacxsens L., Mortier A.V. & Vlerick P., Quantitative study of food safety climate in Belgian food processing companies in view of their organizational characteristics, *Food Control* (2018), doi: 10.1016/j.foodcont.2017.12.037.

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10 11 ABSTRACT

12 The impact of organizational characteristics on food safety management systems is already
13 intensively studied. Recently, scientific research goes beyond the managerial and technical aspects of
14 the food safety management system, incorporating the impact of human behavior by exploring the
15 food safety climate in food companies. In this study the food safety climate in the Belgian food
16 processing industry was investigated and correlations between food safety climate and
17 organizational (general and quality-related) characteristics of food processing companies were
18 assessed. Additionally, the factorial validity of the applied food safety climate assessment tool was
19 investigated, using exploratory factor analysis. Data were gathered through an online survey. Overall,
20 the food safety climate was perceived to be on a good level for most of the 136 responding
21 companies. Companies with multiple sites in Belgium appeared to perceive the food safety climate
22 better than one-site companies. Food companies providing more than one training session per year
23 appeared to perceive their food safety climate significantly better than companies providing less
24 training ($p < 0.001$). For the other organizational characteristics investigated (such as company size,
25 sector, presence of quality department, time spent on quality control, certification, available budget
26 for maintaining the FSMS) no significant correlations with the food safety climate could be proven.
27 Exploratory factor analysis revealed the existence of 4 underlying factors: factor 1 mainly dealing
28 with 'leadership related' indicators, factor 2 with 'resources related' indicators, factor 3 with
29 'communication related' indicators and factor 4 is a mix of mainly 'risk awareness related' indicators
30 and some 'commitment related' indicators.

31 Key words: food safety culture; food safety climate; food processing industry

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