Final Declaration of the 6th Food Safety Congress

The 6th Food Safety Congress, organised with the collaboration of (IAFP-International Association for Food Protection) and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock; under the coordination of the Food Safety Association, and with the presence and contribution of 31 institutions representing every stage of the food chain such as chambers of trade, sectoral associations, producers unions and consumer organisations, thereby gathering all the stakeholders of the food business, was held with the participation of 550 people on the dates of May 3-4 2018. Representatives of all professions taking responsibility at any phase in the food chain, representatives of public and private agencies, academicians, students, consumers and members of the press were present at the congress. A total of 75 speakers, 52 of whom were national and 23 were foreign representatives, delivered their presentations verbally at 19 sessions held in parallel in 3 concurrent sessions and 91 posters were exhibited throughout the congress.

New food processing technologies, innovative approaches in food safety analyses, digitalisation in food safety and the relation between climate change and food safety were the primarily outstanding subjects of the 6th gathering of the Food Safety Congress, which has addressed different themes related to food safety in every convention. Other major topics of the congress were the understanding that consumers' access to accurate information in relation to food safety is equally important as ensuring food safety and media's responsibility in this, and the food - health relationship resulting from the interaction between food and health.

Final declaration of the 6th Food Safety Congress, covering the subject of food safety with a wide range of its aspects, is presented below. You may access the presentations, phorogrpah and detailed information through the website: www.gidaguvenligikongresi.org.

1. Food products are open to interaction with thousands of factors which might lead to health risks throughout the course of processes starting from field/farm to fork. In addition to these, food can naturally contain elements which might involve health risks. As there is no such thing as "zero risk" in any aspect of

life, it is not possible to entirely eliminate all the risks in food safety. Basically there is not a single "zero risk" food item on earth, which is applicable to those that are self-cultivated or home-made. Microbiological contaminants and chemical pollutants exceeding thousands in number, mycotoxins, environmental pollutants affecting food, process contaminants, residues of pesticide are the primary risk factors amongst others. Advanced analysing techniques and scientific developments have brought new risks into discussion. Some of these risks consist of those that have been present ever since food first existed on earth but have become more known recently. Acrylamide formation due to high heat treatment is the best example of such risk. Some other risks, on the other hand, have been coming to our attention lately like the climate change-related scenarios. Science-focused corporate approaches and international regulations must be taken as basis for the assessment, management and communication of food risks regardless of whichever category they are.

2. Innovative approaches are indispensable for safe production, control and analysing of food. Studies conducted using advanced technology supply us with brand new information. Public agencies, universities and private institutions should give due importance to innovative studies and researches, and develop strategies aimed at achieving different goals ranging from raising awareness in this area to allocating more resources to it.

3. Cruciality of information technologies and digitalisation in enhancing the prevalence of food safety practices and improved efficiency of their application is increasing day by day. Digitalisation works in food safety, such areas as blockchain sensor technologies and artificial intelligence being in the first place, should be financially supported and made more attractive.

4. DNA-based advanced technologies such as metagenomic and NGS (Next Generation Sequencing) need to be adopted for epidemiologic studies aiming to determine food poisoning incidents occurring in our country on a case-to-case basis and to establish the tangible correlation between the factors and cases. To this end, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock and universities need to take concerted action, exchange information systematically and co-operate.

5. Probiotics provide great opportunities in terms of making positive impact on human health as well as controlling animal diseases thereby diminishing the use of antibiotics and preventing the biofilm formation in food establishments. Practical scientific studies in this area need to be supported.

6. A holistic approach should be adopted in establishing the rules that must be observed in manufacture, storage, distribution and selling of food products that are internationally traded and with a view to rectify inconsistencies in the legislation relating to food trade. Food safety is an international area.

7. Food safety and health are parts of an inseparable whole. Data sharing, increased cooperation and more inter-disciplinary work have become indispensable in this area.

8. Ongoing global climate change will bring along new food safety threats emerging in several stages of food chain. Ability to anticipate probable changes and preparedness in terms of taking required precautions in the face of different possible scenarios resulting from climate change, factors leading to climate change, and awareness-raising in regards to the measures and strategies that can be adopted against food safety risks caused by these factors, interdisciplinary and international cooperation are all essential.

9. Production, consumption, distribution of foods, research on food, legal regulations, information communicated through media are all subjects which should be considered ethically as well. Ethical responsibilities at all stages of food chain need to be discussed duly and interdisciplinary studies need to be adopted in order to establish common principles.

10. Contemporary international food-related regulations are aimed at protecting human health with a science-focused approach and are based on “acceptable risk”. Food in our country is managed by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock in accordance with the national legislation based on these regulations. The food produced through manufacturing processes undertaken in line with the national legislation proves to be food which is suitable and safe for human health. On the other hand, some limited number of academicians, making unscientific claims, devoid of any scientific grounds, in each and every food-related subject they randomly pick, can end up turning

all the priorities in food safety upside down. Being non-experts in any subtopic of food, these academicians, whose scientific footprint in their specialty areas is questionable as well, are gaining fame and being perceived as food authorities by consumers in our country. The press is also taking the advantage of the sensational environment these individuals bring about. Diverting consumers' attention to non-factual issues rather than actual food safety risks harm public health eventually. Food has evolved into a subject area exploited by those who fail to make a significant contribution scientifically in their areas in order to win a name for themselves. In the face of these unscientific claims about food products produced under governmental permission, within the confines of the conditions defined by the government and under its supervision, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, the authority granting the relevant permission and undertaking the required supervisions, need to be informing consumers risk management-wise more actively.

As in EFSA example, establishment of a structure which is capable of maintaining interactive risk communication with the society and which takes its credibility from its strong scientific grounds should be regarded as the most efficient solution to that.

11. Introducing the concept of risk to consumers above all things and then facilitating their access to the most accurate information on risks food products involve and on contemporary issues should be the principal goal. This is the only way which can enable consumers to assess the real risks and make well-informed preferences. The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, universities, private sector and the press needs to be shouldering a tremendous responsibility to this end: There is an outstanding massive need for developing small and medium enterprises on the scale of both producers and restaurants/kiosks in terms of extending food safety standards to the base level. Food safety and hygiene conditions of small and medium enterprises need to be improved through projects to be developed in this area.

- The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock should maintain transparency in the sharing of results on food safety inspections and relevant risk assessment procedures as well as the detections of counterfeit cases.

- Food industry should not only ensure auto-control in its food production processes but also facilitate the monitoring of these processes by stakeholders through the channel of sectoral non-governmental organisations.

- The press needs to undertake the necessary efforts for the prevention of sensational and nonfactual information being delivered to consumers. The information pollution prevalent in our country, which is pushed further by media, is non-existent in several other countries.

12. There is an outstanding massive need for developing small and medium enterprises on the scale of both producers and restaurants/kiosks in terms of extending food safety standards to the base level. Food safety and hygiene conditions of small and medium enterprises need to be improved through projects to be developed in this area.

13. The method of drafting legal regulations concerning food is of paramount importance. Legal regulations, requiring a highly complex and multi-faceted processes, should absolutely be based upon scientific grounds. It is essential to increase the overall recognition on the relevant contemporary legal regulations and apply these in legal procedures without losing any further time as well as introducing regulations that serve the benefit of public interest, have scientific grounds and are made through participatory and transparent processes. “Food Law” should be regarded as a private field of law and more work should be dedicated to that end.