Critical review of methodology and application of risk ranking for prioritisation of food and feed related issues, on the basis of the size of anticipated health impact

This study aimed to critically review methodologies for ranking of risks related to feed/food safety and nutritional hazards, on the basis of their anticipated human health impact. An extensive systematic literature review was performed to identify and characterize the available methodologies for risk ranking in the fields of feed and food safety and nutritional hazards, as well as the socio-economic field. Risk ranking methods from the environmental field were studied as well to determine whether approaches used in this field could also be applied for ranking human health risks related to feed and food safety and nutritional hazards. The review used a predefined search protocol. It covered the bibliographic databases Scopus, CAB Abstracts, Web of Sciences, and PubMed over the period 1993-2013. All references obtained were stored into an Endnote database and evaluated for their relevance. All references deemed to be relevant were studied in–depth so as to characterize the risk ranking method described. Characteristics of each method were stored in an Excel database. The methods for risk ranking were then grouped into method categories, which were described in general. These groups included: risk assessment, comparative risk assessment, risk ratio method, scoring method, cost of illness, DALY/QALY, willingness to pay, multi criteria decision analysis, risk matrix, flow charts/decision trees and expert judgment methods. Based on the characteristics of the individual methods and the method categories, an overarching framework was developed for selection of the appropriate method(s) that could be used for risk ranking of feed and food related hazards, on the basis of human health impact. This framework has the format of a decision tool, with which – given the characteristics of the risk ranking question at hand - the most appropriate method(s) can be selected. Application of this overall framework to several case studies showed it can be a useful tool for risk managers/assessors to select the most suitable method for risk ranking of feed/food and diet related hazards, on the basis of expected human health impact.

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